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THE HINDU

Govt. extends interest subvention scheme



“Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme” also extended, to cover 15 new product categories

The government on Tuesday extended the interest subvention scheme to make banks advance crop loans of up to Rs. 3 lakh at the rate of 7 per cent. “The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the continuation of interest subvention by public sector banks, private sector commercial banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks and NABARD to enable them to provide short-term crop loans of up to Rs. 3 lakh to farmers at 7 per cent a year during 2015-16,” an official said.

The Cabinet decided to provide relief to farmers affected by natural calamities, where the interest subvention of 2 per cent will continue to be available to banks for the first year on the restructured amount, officials said.

The Cabinet extended the Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme by five years and expanded the scope of the programme to cover 15 new product categories.

The move will tie in with the government’s “Make in India” and “Digital India” initiatives.

The demand for electronics in India is expected to reach \$400 billion by 2020. The electronics sector has the potential to attract \$100 billion in investment and provide jobs to 28 million people.

The new product categories in the package scheme include smart cards, consumer appliances (such as washing machines, refrigerators, air conditioners), electronic product design, optical fibres and Internet of Things products.

“The scheme has been extended for a period of five years beyond July 26, 2015. The extension of the scheme is a big boost towards making India a global destination for electronics manufacturing,” an official said.

In another decision, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs also approved a proposal for restructuring the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) project, which is aimed at protecting and conserving the coastal environment. Proposed by the Environment Ministry, the committee gave its approval to the restructuring the project, which includes revising the cost estimate from Rs. 1,155.6 crore to Rs. 1580.1 crore.

The Cabinet gave the go-ahead for a creation of a Central agriculture university in Samastipur in Bihar with an outlay of Rs. 295 crore.

PM to release ‘Vision 2050’: Union Minister

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release ‘Vision 2050’ prepared by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) here on July 25, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh on Tuesday said.

“The Prime Minister will be the chief guest at ICAR foundation day celebrations here and release ‘Vision 2050’ for agriculture prepared by it to tackle the challenges of future,” Mr. Singh told reporters.

The ICAR foundation day celebrations is being organised outside Delhi for the first time.

Three projects

He said Mr. Modi will also inaugurate three new projects — Farmers First, Arya and Mera Gaon Mera Gaurav (My village my pride) — to stress on the ‘lab to land’ concept of the Centre.

On that day, the Prime Minister will ask agriculture scientists from all over the country to speed up the 'lab-to-land' approach, intended to provide new technologies to farmers, which will lead to a quantum jump in agriculture productivity.

The Union Agriculture Minister said Patna was chosen to host ICAR foundation day celebrations because Bihar has an important place in the history of agricultural research. -- PTI

Fertilisers at FP shops in a week

Fertilisers will be supplied to farmers, by linking their Aadhaar cards under the 'electronic Point of Sale' (e-PoS) scheme, at fair price shops within a week, Commissioner of Agriculture Madhusudana Rao said on Tuesday. The Commissioner and Nandyal MP S.P.Y. Reddy inspected e-PoS gadgets at a fair price shop at Nandyal. The e-PoS system was introduced to supply qualitative fertilisers to farmers in a transparent manner, Mr. Madhusudana Rao said.

'Motivate farmers to take up drip irrigation'

Commissioner of Horticulture and Sericulture Usha Rani on Tuesday asked the department officials to extend technical know-how to increase fruit and vegetable yield in the district to ensure more revenue for farmers.

Speaking at a review meeting at the Collectorate, she said that farmers relying on borewells for irrigation water should be motivated to take up drip irrigation, given the depleting groundwater table in the district Ms. Usha Rani said. Farmers must be trained on growing onion, banana, papaya using modern farming techniques and ensure double digit growth among farmers.

Farmers belonging to SC/ST communities were eligible for subsidy of Rs. 1 lakh and small and marginal farmers owning 10 acres of land would get 50 per cent subsidy, the Commissioner said.

Bengaluru chilli has good demand in Hyderabad horticulture officials should encourage farmers to grow it. Services of agriculture polytechnic students should be used to spread awareness among farmers, she suggested. Farmers must be encouraged to build godowns to store onion crop whose yield was good in the district, she said.

District Collector Ch. Vijayamohan asked officials to prepare crop-wise list of farmers to grow fruits and vegetables using modern methods.

Saaral Thiruvizha from Saturday

Flower show and vegetable carving expo on Sunday

Buoyed by the success of its earlier shows, the Department of Horticulture has planned to organise a flower show and a vegetable carving expo during the 'Saaral Thiruvizha 2015' on July 26 (Sunday).

The much-awaited 'Saaral Thiruvizha', being celebrated in Courtallam during the season every year with a range of cultural events presented by troupes from different States, will be held this year from July 25 to August 1.

The district administration has planned to make it a hit this year too with various cultural events, exhibitions and competitions for the tourists.

In a meeting held at the Collectorate on Monday to review the preparations made for the successful conduct of the annual event, Collector M. Karunakaran said the inaugural function of 'Saaral Thiruvizha 2015' would be attended by Minister for Tourism S.P. Shanmuganathan, MPs, MLAs and senior officials from the Department of Tourism.

The 'Hort Expo 2015' to be organised by the Department of Horticulture at Eco Park near Five Falls would be the highlight of the second day celebrations as a range of flowers, vegetables, tropical and sub-tropical produces would be on the display.

"Apart from the vegetable carvings depicting a good number of animals, birds and reptiles, six images, mostly cartoon characters, made with flowers will attract visitors, especially children," said C. Chandrasekaran, Joint Director of Agriculture.

Moreover, swimming competitions in different categories would be conducted at the pool near Courtallam town panchayat office on the same day. Winners would receive their prizes during the cultural events to be held in the evening.

The police and animal husbandry departments would jointly organise a dog show on the third day while rangoli and chubby baby competitions would be conducted by the Department of Social Welfare on the next day (July 28). The Department of School Education would organise a drawing competition on the fifth day and a boat race by the Department of Tourism at Vennamadaikulam on the Five Falls Road would ensure a stiff competition this year too.

‘Mr. Courtallam’ for the tourists would be conducted at ‘Kalaivaanar Kalaiyarangam’ on the seventh day (July 31) of the celebration.

“We’ve rope in various departments to ensure the successful conduct of the eight-day celebrations,” Dr. Karunakaran noted.

Tenkasi ASP P. Aravindan, District Revenue Officer M.G. Kulandaivel, Project Director, District Rural Development Agency, H. Vijayakumar and senior officials were present.

Explore the possibility of alternative crop: DC

Deputy Commissioner D. Randeep has directed the officials of the Agriculture Department to explore the possibility of alternative crop, if the district fails to receive rain even in the last week of July.

Chairing the review meeting on agriculture, drinking water and fodder here on Monday, he asked the officials to prepare a plan for procuring seeds and fertilizer for the month of August, if no sowing starts in July owing to deficient rainfall.

“In the event of no rain, the possibility of the government declaring the district as drought-hit is higher. In such a case, keep the detailed report of the taluk-wise status of agriculture ready for submitting to the government,” he said.

Scanty rainfall

Manjunath, Joint Director of Agriculture Department, informed the meeting that if the district receives rain in the last week of July, then the farmers could cultivate sunflower.

He said that the district has already received less than fifty percent of the deficit rainfall as against the average rainfall.

While the average rainfall was 248 mm, only 117.1 mm rain had been received by the district in kharif season. Of the total 4.70 lakh hectare sowing area, the sowing was over on only 10 per cent land.

Santosh Inamdar, Deputy Director of Horticulture Department, said that onion, which should have been cultivated in 12,000 hectare land, has been sown only on 1,230 hectare irrigated land.

The official, however, said that there was still time for onion sowing, and hoped that they would reach the set target.

Mr. Randeep, on drinking water status, said that 79 villages of the district were facing a drinking water problem. Thus, the water was being supplied through 202 tankers every day.

He directed the officials concerned to prepare a list of villages that may face drinking water shortage in coming days and funds required to address it.

Farmers' organisations seek right to fix prices of agricultural produce

Farmers' organisations have demanded a "right to fix the price" for their produce and waiver of agricultural loans and the interest on them.

They were participating in a programme to mark the 35th Farmers' Martyr Day, outside the Deputy Commissioner's office here on Tuesday. It was organised by the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and other farmers' organisations.

It also turned to be a protest against the alleged failure of the State and Union governments to evolve pro-farmer policies to arrest the series of farmers' suicides and steps to improve their financial condition.

District president of the Sugarcane Growers' Association T.T. Murkatnal said the manufacturers of industrial and consumer products enjoyed the right to fix the price for their products to be sold at Maximum Retail Price.

But, growers of foodgrains, fruits, and vegetables were denied similar rights.

The government was not even willing to at least fix scientific prices for agricultural produce in view of the cultivation cost.

"Denying farmers the right to fix prices for their produce and absence of scientific prices are the two main reasons forcing millions of small and marginal farmers to bankruptcy. Some of them are committing suicide due to their inability to overcome financial indebtedness and the loss of hope that the government is there to protect them," Prof. Murkatnal said.

Earlier, KRRS district general secretary Beerappa Pujery said one of the reasons behind the suicides this year was the failure of the sugar mills to pay bills within the stipulated 15 days from the date of supplying sugarcane and lack of irrigation facilities. Delay in payments was forcing small and marginal farmers to take loans from moneylenders at exorbitant interest rates.

He alleged that the Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party and the Janata Dal (Secular) were shedding crocodile tears over farmers' deaths only to divert the attention from the exploitation by sugar mills, many of which were controlled by their party legislators, Ministers, MPs and leaders. KRRS district president Basavaraj Malalli was present. Later, the farmers staged a 'rasta roko' at Rani Channamma Circle and submitted a memorandum to the authorities.

ZP members concerned over lack of rain

Ballari Zilla Pachayat members have expressed concern over the drought-like situation in the district.

At the general body meeting here on Tuesday, they urged Anita, ZP president, who was in the chair, to forward a detailed report on the prevailing situation to the government and initiate steps to ensure that there would not be any drinking-water crisis and there would be adequate fodder available for cattle. During the discussion, the members took to task the executive engineer for water supply and other officials of the department for not taking any steps to provide drinking water to villages.

“Several villages are facing severe drinking water crisis as the borewells, which are the main source, have gone dry. Despite being told, no steps have been initiated to rejuvenate/ drill new borewells. When we question the officials, they just say there are no funds, which come as a shock to us. For, the chief executive officer says that there is no dearth of funds, while the officials say a number of bills are pending and the contractors are not willing to execute the work until payment is made,” K.M. Shashidhar of the Congress said.

The problem had escalated after a separate department for drinking water supply was formed. Payment for contractors had been pending and members, out of their keenness to ensure proper supply of drinking water in villages, were getting pumps on credit. Mr. Hussain from the Agricultural Department said the district had recorded deficient rainfall affecting sowing. According to him, the sowing percentage had touched a mere 26 which usually should have been 40 by mid-July every year.

Ms. Anita asked the CEO to prepare a detailed report to the government.

‘Let HC judge-headed panel study farmer suicides’

State govt. trying to cover-up its failure by blaming private moneylenders : Shanthakumar

A committee headed by a High Court judge and comprising farm experts, psychologists and farmer representatives should be constituted to study the reasons for farmer suicides and find out solutions, president of the State Sugarcane Growers Association Kuruburu Shanthakumar has said.

Report

Addressing presspersons here on Tuesday, Mr. Shanthakumar urged the State government to set up an experts committee immediately and direct it to give its report within a month.

Recommendations

Referring to reports about commission to be headed by farm scientist M.S. Swaminathan being set up, Mr. Shanthakumar said that as the recommendations of the commission headed by Mr. Swaminathan on agricultural prices had been ignored, there would be no point in appointing another commission headed by him.

He alleged that the State government was trying to cover-up its failure by blaming private moneylenders for farmer suicides.

Loan waiver

Blaming the State government for such suicides, he demanded loan waiver of all kinds of farm loans and the immediate simplification of the loan disbursement procedure.

Mr. Shanthakumar urged the State government to take steps to sell sugar seized from sugar mills through cooperative societies and fair price shops and to pay the amount due to farmers.

Nationalisation

Mr. Shanthakumar said that as sugar mill owners were violating government orders and also court orders, the only solution was nationalisation of sugar mills.

He said that the Union government had nationalised over 8,000 banks in the 1970s and it would not be a difficult task to nationalise the 400 sugar mills in the country. Responding to a query, Mr. Shanthakumar said that different farmers organisations had decided to fight unitedly on common issues for protecting the interests of farmers.

Panel to recommend new procurement policy

The State Government on Tuesday constituted a committee to suggest a suitable procurement policy of essential commodities to it before the commencement of procurement in the coming kharif marketing season (KMS) 2015-16 beginning in October/November.

In the orders issued for the purpose by Commissioner of Civil Supplies Rajat Kumar, it was stated that a policy was necessary since the Government of India had already informed the States that there shall be no (zero) levy on rice from the millers and dealers from KMS 2015-16.

The committee to be head by Principal Secretary (Registration and Stamps) Vinod Kumar Agarwal would also have Mr. Rajat Kumar, Agriculture Production Commissioner and Secretary Agriculture C. Parthasarathi, Secretary (Finance) N. Siva Sankar and Director (Marketing) A. Sarath as its members.

Mr. Rajat Kumar, explained the procurement system hitherto, stated that procurement operations were done through Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS), Indira Kranti Patham (IKP) groups and District Cooperative Marketing Societies (DCMS) till KMS 2014-15. At the micro level, none of these agencies had the requisite technical, accounting or logistical expertise.

IKP groups withdraw

from process

Besides, the IKP groups managed by the Rural Development Department have decided to withdraw from procurement operations from KMS 2015-16. The Centre had prepared a draft proposal for public-private-partnership under which all the responsibilities right from procurement of paddy, milling, storage and transportation to buffer go-downs and mandal-level stock (MLS) points would be taken up by private parties selected on the basis of a comprehensive tender process. Under this scheme, purchase centres would be maintained by professional organisations and the required expenditure would be borne by them without any need for budgetary support. The committee would consider all the matters connected with the formulation of a suitable procurement policy and for deciding the pricing and quality norms.

It would examine an alternative arrangement in case tenders could not be finalised in time, the Civil Supplies Commissioner stated adding that it would further examine the issue pertaining to various procedures being followed by the Civil Supplies Corporation in procuring commodities such as redgram dal, sugar and others.

The option for procuring the commodities from industries within Telangana in order to encourage local industries would also be examined.

WhatsApp networking to bolster farming

In a novel initiative to promote organic farming, Neeleshwaram municipality has embarked on an ambitious project by forming a 'WhatsApp' group of stake holders to streamline cultivation making use of available barren land.

The group coordinated by the municipal Secretary has councillors, aspiring group farmers, Kerala Agriculture University experts, Agriculture officials, Community Development Society (CDS) members, and vegetable vendors. The idea to involve WhatsApp group was taken to get guidance from competent persons and agencies to streamline the entire cultivation process and to ensure fair market for the producers mainly of vegetables and tapioca in the initial stage, Neeleshwaram municipal Secretary N. K. Hareesh said.

The WhatsApp networking is intended to be used to clear apprehensions on issues related to organic farming, sustained cultivation and pest control, besides arranging timely procurement of manure.

The municipality, as a first step, will start the cultivation process from July 22 by commencing land preparation works in 3 acres at Chirappuram near the town on the day.

The municipality eventually will stretch the cultivation in around 40 acre of barren land, he said, adding efforts were under way to stock organic manure needed by the farmers in the group.

The municipality is also planning to arrange assistance from the NABARD to the aspiring farmers.

Demo unit on weed control

Indian Council of Agricultural Research-Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Ernakulam) of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has launched a programme to demonstrate biological control of aquatic weeds.

A statement from ICAR-KVK here said that many fresh water ponds were not usable due to excessive growth of aquatic weeds. Though weedicides can be used to control them, their use can harm fish resources and pollute water bodies, the press release said.

However, certain fresh water fishes like grass carp feed on these weeds and can grow to attain a body weight of 50 kg. Their management is easy as they do not breed and aquatic weeds in a pond extending over an acre can be managed by releasing 20 grass carps into it.

The fishes were released on Tuesday into Kodamkulam in Tripunithura, which extends over an acre. The programme was inaugurated by chairman of Tripunithura municipality R. Venugopal.

Village accountants to assess crop loss in Kundapur

Village accountants have been directed to calculate the crop loss in Kundapur taluk due to rain and floods on July 19 and 20.

Gayatri Nayak, Kundapur Tahsildar, told *The Hindu* on Tuesday that the Department of Agriculture had only conveyed that about 2,325 acres of land was flooded by water in the taluk due to rain on these days. But the department was yet to submit a technical report on the actual crop loss.

After that the report was submitted, the damage to agricultural crop could be assessed. The administration has also directed village accountants to assess damage to agricultural and horticultural crops in the taluk and submit their reports.

Already, the administration had paid a compensation of Rs. 3.27 lakh to 14 persons in the taluk for damage to their houses in the taluk, Ms. Nayak said. With regard to the breach of Varahi Left Bank Canal at Molahalli village in the taluk, rectification work was on, she said.

S. Raghavendra, Karkala Tahsildar, said that floods had receded in the taluk and there were no reports of any damage of any kind on Tuesday.

Paddy and areca crop of at least 10 families in Durga village was destroyed on July 19.

According to the Udupi Taluk Office, the house of Shankari Poojary was damaged when a coconut tree fell on it at Korangrapady and the loss was estimated at Rs. 20,000. Udupi received a rainfall of 21.7 mm in the last 24 hours ending at 9 a.m. on Tuesday. Kundapur and Karkala received a rainfall of 12.8 mm and 30.7 mm respectively.

Himachal to file review petition against HC order on forest encroachment

With public pressure mounting against felling of fruit-bearing trees, Chief Minister Virbhadra Singh on Monday directed the concerned officers to immediately file a review petition in the High Court against its earlier order to remove encroachment from forest land.

“The government is fully apprised of the situation and a review petition would be filed in next two three days to stop felling of trees to evict the encroachers,” he said.

Dubbing the action of Forest Department as “irrational and unfair”, Mr. Singh said the High Court never ordered axing of apple-laden trees and the maximum the department could do was take the orchards into its possession.

Claiming that there were disputes in the land titles in many cases as no demarcations had been done, Singh said axing of apple trees would have serious repercussions and the green cover would shrink.

The encroachers should first be asked to surrender the encroached land and felling of trees should be last resort, he said, adding, he has already issued orders for filing a review petition in the High Court to contest the order, get it stayed or suggest alternate steps to save standing tress.

The chief minister observed that influential persons who have encroached upon several bighas of the forest after felling green trees have been left out while small and marginal farmers, some of whom might be rendered landless, have faced the axe.

Earlier, a delegation of the Congress MLAs led by Horticulture Minister Vidya Stokes and comprising Chief Parliamentary secretaries Rohit Thakur and Nand Lal, Mohan Lal Bragta MLA and Chairman HP State Marketing Board Subhash Manglate had met the chief minister and urged him to file a review petition.

Mr. Singh held the previous BJP government responsible for the chaos and claimed that it was after the government announced a policy to regularise encroachments, many people encroached on the forest land overnight and filed affidavits, giving details of encroached lands. - PTI

Banks ‘humiliating’ farmers defaulting on loans: KRRS

The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha has complained that banks in Bidar district are publishing photographs of defaulting farmers on their notice board, and “humiliating” them.

KRRS leaders alleged that a nationalised bank has put up a board with photographs of 15 defaulters. What is more, the words “Hall of Shame” is scribbled over the glass display case, they added.

KRRS leader Veerabhushan Nandagave said: “Some banks use heralders to shout out names of defaulters in villages. Some others announce that the fields of defaulters would be taken over by the government.”

A farmer, Gopal Reddy from Nagankera, has been missing from his village after he received a loan repayment notice from a nationalised bank. Scarce rain destroyed the crops and he could not repay the loan, says his mother Rukmavva Reddy. The farmer took a loan of Rs. 1 lakh from the Kheni-Ranjol branch last year. On July 9, he received copies of first information reports of a criminal case filed by the bank against 54 farmers who defaulted. The charges include forgery and cheating.

“On the one hand, the bank does not stop asking us to repay loans. On the other, we are not getting loans from moneylenders as the government has launched a crackdown on *metre baddi*. The men have run away; where will we go?” she said.

District Lead Bank manager K.N. Dayalan said that he would talk to officers and seek information about the complaints.

Allocate water to backward districts, says CPI (M)

CPI (M) leaders on Tuesday urged the Central government to reallocate river waters so as to first serve the irrigation and drinking water needs of drought-prone and backward districts.

The government must allocate Rs. 50,000 crore to build irrigation projects in Rayalaseema within five years and mitigate drought in the region, CPI(M) State Committee member G. Obulu demanded at a press conference. Out of the 216 mandals in Rayalaseema, the government has certified that 161 are drought-affected but its relief measures have been tardy, he alleged.

Farmers were yet to be given crop insurance and input subsidies for the crop year 2013-14 in Rayalaseema, he said.

This year, the situation was far worse, with sowing operations taken up in a meagre 10 per cent of the normal cultivable area.

Groundnut, the major crop in Kurnool district, would have to be forsworn if there were no rains this week, he added.

Seed capital plan likely to face litigation

'Eviction will violate Article 14 of Constitution'

The State government's decision to evict people from three villages that fall within the upcoming Amaravati seed capital area is likely to be challenged in courts.

The Capital Area Rythanga Samakhya (CARS), which represents more than 3,000 farmers, said it would file a writ petition in the High Court against the 'discrimination' shown by the government against farmers living in the capital area.

Releasing the seed capital plan in Rajahmundry on Monday, Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had admitted that some villagers who live within the core area would have to be shifted. CARS said this flew in the face of previous assurances by the government that residents of 29 villages would not be disturbed, while their farm land would be needed for the capital.

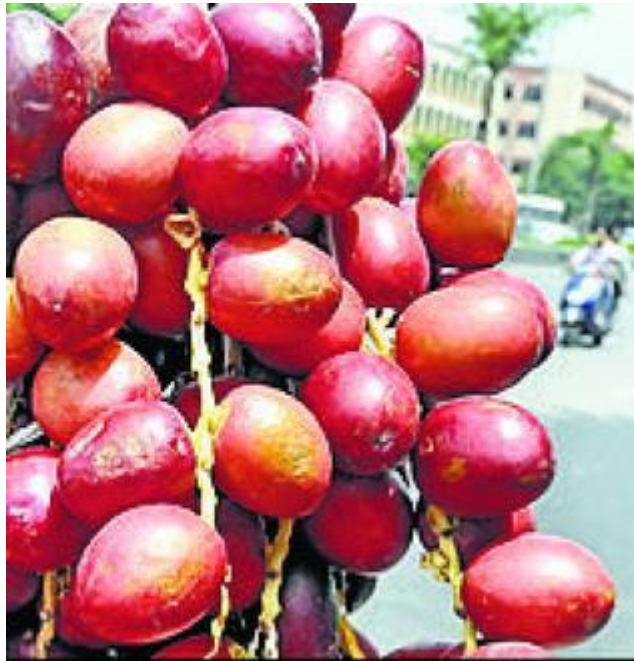
The seed capital area plan makes it clear that at least three villages – Ligayapalem, Uddhandrayanipalem and Tallayapalem – fall squarely where major institutions of the new capital are planned to be built. CARS member Mallela Seshagiri Rao, a landowner and civil liberties activist, said the eviction of these villagers would violate Article 14 of the Constitution. Equal compensation is not being given to different categories of villagers, he said. For instance, farmers whose lands are being taken under the Land Pooling Scheme were being given different terms of compensation, while those whose land is taken under the Land Acquisition Act are being given quite different terms. "This is void as per the law," Mr. Seshagiri Rao said.

"If now, the government makes a separate offer to the residents of these three villages, yet a third category of evictees would emerge," he said. "We raised an objection to the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) in form 9.2, but we have not received any response

yet. No response is being given because the government knows that the instant it gives a reply it will have to commit itself,” Mr. Rao said.

“Even now, no master plan details have been made public. All the government has done is release some 3D pictures,” he said.

Season of date palm harvest



This elongated scarlet fruit arranged in little mounds on carts adds colour to the dull monotony of national highways of Krishnagiri-Dharmapui-Salem, as it’s the season of the date palm harvest.

Rain lashes Salem



Salem city, and other parts of the district experienced sharp showers accompanied by winds for sometime on Tuesday evening. The sudden rainfall brought much respite to the people suffering from sweltering heat. Various low lying areas and roads were inundated in the city leading to traffic snarls. The sky remained overcast for a major part of afternoon.

Hopes of dam opening surge as Mettur inflow improves

Buoyed over the spurt in flow into the Mettur dam over the past two days, farmers in the delta districts of Tamil Nadu are expecting Chief Minister Jayalalithaa to order opening of the Stanley Reservoir over next week.

With the Cauvery getting heavy inflows, caused by surplus discharge by Karnataka, the PWD authorities believe the dam level will cross the 90-feet-mark by Wednesday night. If water is released early next week, irrigation and Aadi 18 festival requirements in the delta region from Karur to Karaikal will be met.

Kuruvai paddy raised over an estimated 1.40 lakh acres in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts using motor pumps for irrigation is facing a piquant situation. Normally, during this season there would be moisture in the atmosphere, but this year it is different as hot and humid conditions prevail in the region and dry fields have developed deep surface cracks. Overloaded transformers are struggling to meet the burgeoning power demand for pump sets. Consequently, farmers are unable to fully irrigate the fields.

Also, farmers from Karur to Karaikal start preparing nurseries for raising samba and thalady paddy crop from the second week of August. Samba and Thalady paddy crops will be raised on an estimated 12.50 lakh acres in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagappattinam, Cuddalore, Ariyalur, Perambalur, Tiruchi, Pudukkottai and Karur districts apart from Karaikal region. In the core Cauvery delta, samba will be raised on 3.40 lakh acres in Thanjavur district, 2.95 lakh acres in Tiruvarur district and 2.65 lakh acres in Nagappattinam district. Those farmers too are calculating the water availability to prepare the nurseries.

The immensely popular Adi 18 festival falls on August 3 and would be celebrated by people in cities and towns along the entire course of the river more joyously if there is water flow. The prevailing conditions necessitate increased drinking water facilitation for the public in several towns and cities that depend on Cauvery water supply.

“The State government must chart a plan to release water soon to primarily save the standing kuruvai crop and also to facilitate samba farmers to schedule their nursery preparations. Also, the turn system in irrigation of Cauvery and Vennar basins must be resorted to from the

beginning for better water management. We know Chief Minister will take into account these aspects and order water release,” observes general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association Mannargudi S. Ranganathan.

Considering the benefits of the kuruvai package, we urge the State government to extend a similar samba package to delta farmers, says V. Jeevakumar, secretary of the CPI(M)-affiliated Tamil Nadu Vivasaya Thozhilalar Sangam.

Heavy rainfall in catchment area improves KRS level



Reservoir level touches 110-ft mark

orrorntial rain that has been lashing the catchment areas of the Cauvery in Kodagu has improved the water-level of the Krishnaraja Sagar Reservoir (KRS) in the district.

The water-level crossed the 110-ft mark on Tuesday night. The full-reservoir level (FRL) is 124.8 ft.

The level was 99.75 feet during the corresponding period last year.

Heavy inflow

Flow into the reservoir was at the rate of 22,595 cusecs and outflow was at 9,214 cusecs at 6 a.m. on Tuesday. According to the Cauvery Neeravari Nigam Ltd. (CNNL), the level was 109.25 ft on Tuesday morning and it crossed the 110 ft mark at night.

For the last two days, several parts of Kodagu district, especially in the catchment areas, have been receiving heavy rainfall , a CNNL officer said.

If heavy rainfall continues to lash the Cauvery catchment areas and along the upstream of the KRS, the reservoir will attain its FRL in six or seven days, the officer said.

To canals

The CNNL has released water at the rate of 7,126 cusecs to Tamil Nadu and for drinking purposes to a few districts, and at 2,088 cusecs to canals from the KRS, Irrigation department sources said.

If rain continues to lash the catchment areas, the KRS will attain its Full-reservoir level

Cotton crop fails

Another debt-ridden small farmer Agasara Mallaiah (50) committed suicide at his residence in Kappagal village in Ballari taluk on Monday night. This is the fourth incident in the past two months in Ballari district. Mallaiah, who owned a two-acre piece of land, had availed a loan of Rs. 2 lakh, including Rs. 60,000 taken from a bank. The cotton crop he had cultivated had failed. He had also borrowed money for the marriages of three of his five children, his relatives said.

‘Fix sugarcane price at Rs. 3,500’



Ravindran, president of the Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Growers Association, speaking at a conference of sugarcane growers in Kalaburagi on Tuesday.— Photo: Arun Kulkarni

Tamil Nadu Sugar Cane Growers Association president Ravindran has demanded that the State government fix purchase price of sugarcane by sugar factories at Rs. 3,500 per tonne taking into account the increasing cost of cultivation and the profits accrued by sugar factories by paying low prices to the raw material purchased from farmers.

Speaking after inaugurating a one-day State-level sugarcane growers’ conference organised by the Karnataka Pranta Raita Sangha here on Tuesday, Mr. Ravindran said the cost of production of one tonne of sugarcane was around Rs. 2,500, but the price fixed by the government was much less than the cost of cultivation.

Accusing the Union government of extending all the help to private sugar factories including an interest-free loan of Rs. 17,000 crore in the past 17 months to settle the dues of farmers, he said the same government had done very little to mitigate the problems of farmers. The government also helped the factories make a clean profit of Rs. 3,000 crore by cancelling the condition of supply of 10 per cent of production of sugar as levy to the government for supplying it through Public Distribution System.

Mr. Ravindran said there was no truth in the claims of sugar factory managements that they were incurring losses. “Private sugar factories account only profit through sale of sugar and do not show the profit accrued by selling by-products such as bagasse, molasses and ethanol,” he pointed out.

He said if private factories continued their adamant attitude, the government should take over these factories and run them on a cooperative basis. Sugar factories should be asked continue to bear the expenses of harvesting and transport, and also share the profit with the raw material-supplying farmers.

He said the Tamil Nadu sugarcane growers were successful in getting an order from the High Court directing sugar factories to share profit with farmers. Around 4 lakh sugarcane growers were paid Rs. 220 crore in profit-sharing by the factories. The Karnataka growers should take a cue from their counterparts in Tamil Nadu and file a case in the High Court and get a favourable order, he said.

DECCAN Chronicle

Heavy monsoon rains bring Mumbai to a halt



Light to heavy rains after nearly a month-long dry spell brought relief from the sultry weather conditions even as suburban train services on western and central lines were hit today due to the water-logging in some parts following incessant showers.

Some express trains of Western Railway were cancelled due to water-logging while local train services of Central Railway were suspended for a short while 10 between Kurla and Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (CST) after tracks got submerged between Sion and Kurla.

Department redefines non-ESAs, they are reserve forest



Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has managed to calm high-range tempers by rejecting the maps of ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) prepared by the Forest Department, but it seems only for the time being.

The department's maps, which political parties and settlers in the high ranges consider outrageous, have underscored a legal point that will be hard to ignore: Areas marked as non-ESA in the maps prepared by the Oommen V. Oommen committee but falling within larger areas notified as reserve forest will be governed by the Forest Conservation Act, 1972. The maps have given rise to a new classification: 'reserve forest non-ESA' lands. In other words, any development activity in 'reserve forest non-ESA' lands will be subject to as stringent restrictions as in lands declared ESA.

The Forest Department's late intervention has made the ESA and non-ESA differentiation complicated. While the Oommen V. Oommen Committee took out agricultural land, built-up land including towns and houses from areas declared as ESA by the High-Level Working Group headed by K. Kasturirangan, the Forest Department maps show all these areas as

reserve forest. For instance, the Kasturirangan panel had taken out all of Karunapuram village in Idukki except 2.93 sq km from ESA status. But the department map has the entire 53.39 sq km of the village, including patches of Cardamam Hill Reserve, as ESA.

Former union minister Jairam Ramesh has backed the department move. “Cardamom plantations must be treated as forest areas,” he said, contradicting Chief Minister Oommen Chandy. The charge against the department is that its maps are old, dating before Kerala formation. However, department sources say that these areas include ecologically fragile land, encroachments and areas caught in legal disputes. “Encroachments prior to 1977 have been regularised. But encroachments had taken place after 1977. These, too, have been notified as reserve forests,” the official said.

Further, Kerala Private Forests Vesting and Assignment Act, 1971, which sought to convert private forests except agricultural lands within these into natural forests, had resulted in encroachments and legal disputes.

The Indian **EXPRESS**

Invest in rural infrastructure to tackle agrarian crisis: Madhav Chitale



Even as farmers in the state grapple with sub-normal rainfall, the bigger challenge before the government is to invest in basic rural infrastructure such as roads linking the village to farms, says noted water management expert Madhav Chitale.

In the 40,000 villages that dot the state, nearly half the access roads to agricultural fields will need to be rebuilt to ensure year-round connectivity.

During monsoons, most fields in remote villages remain disconnected due to the poor state of access roads.

Speaking to [The Indian Express](#), Chitale said, “In a competitive economy, unless we have easy access to farms produce and ready markets the economic prosperity of farmers will remain on paper.”

“The first priority should be to develop agro-infrastructure and second, water conservation to enhance the irrigation potential.”

“What is the use of promoting two or three cycle crops if the produce of rabi or kharif cannot be taken out of the fields into the market? Unfortunately, the focus has always been on short-term loan packages and funds spent on irrigation projects and not rural infrastructure.”

While stressing that a loan waiver cannot be a single solution to tackle the agrarian crisis, Chitale said, “I would say we need to redefine poverty if we have to find a real solution to the crisis. A farmer holding five acres land in dry land cannot be dismissed as rich just because his counterpart operating in fertile land reaps better dividends.”

“At the same time there may be farmers who are financially prosperous and availing the benefits and those deserving being deprived. There should be proper categorisation and one yard stick cannot be adopted for all farmers across the region,” he added.

Chitale called for a holistic approach with both forward and backward linkages for a seamless farm to market supply chain.

“Today, you promote horticulture but where are the assured markets? If the vegetables and fruits are not immediately transported from fields to the market it would perish. Whether it is developing cold storages or creating market centres, large investments are needed.”

At a time when the [Congress-NCP](#) have raised the pitch for a loan waiver, and the state government has ushered policy measures to address the root cause of the agrarian crisis, Chitale said, “We have to make hard decisions to develop the agricultural sector. It will have to evolve as agro-industry if farmers’ interests are to be protected. Unless we have access to fields, develop markets or storage facilities how are we going to make agriculture economically feasible?”

Rain after 20-day dry spell brings relief for farmers



After nearly 20 days, south Gujarat and Saurashtra regions witnessed moderate to heavy rainfall on Tuesday, giving a new lease of life to otherwise withering cash crops of groundnut and cotton.

In south Gujarat, Dharampur in Valsad received 177.8 mm rainfall, while Kaprada, Umargam and Saputara (Dangs district) received 171 mm, 127 mm and 101.6 mm rain, respectively. Other parts of Valsad, such as Vapi, the town and Pardi, received moderate rainfall.

Heavy shower in Surat (127 mm) hit normal life as waterlogging on several city streets threw traffic out of gear. Tapi and Navsari districts have also received heavy rainfall in the past 24 hours with weathermen forecasting similar weather for Wednesday

Ahmedabad and Vadodara also received intermittent rain since morning. Rain on Tuesday came as a boon for farmers in south Gujarat and Saurashtra regions, where crops had started to dry for the want of water.

The state had not received any significant rainfall since June 24. In Saurashtra, while Jamkandorana taluka in Rajkot received 40 mm rainfall — the highest in the region, Amreli, Gir Somnath, Junagarh and Bhavnagar districts received moderate showers. PTI adds:

Due to heavy rainfall in neighbouring Maharashtra and breaches between Palghar and Boisar there, five Gujarat-bound express trains from Mumbai were cancelled.

The cancelled trains are Ahmedabad Express, Bandra-Surat Inter-city Express, Mumbai Central-Ahmedabad Shatabdi Express, Mumbai Central-Porbundar Express and Bandra Terminus-Vapi passenger train

Rajasthan to regularise pre-'99 colonies on agricultural land

The Vasundhara Raje government in the state will re-launch former Ashok Gehlot government's Prashasan Shehron Ke Sang Abhiyaan, taking forward the incomplete work of regularising pre-1999 residential colonies built on agricultural land in Jaipur.

The campaign was first launched by the previous Congress government in 2012 when the decision to over 1,700 such colonies was taken. The decision would affect close to 1.5 lakh families in Jaipur.

The state cabinet, which met on Tuesday, gave a go-ahead to the campaign, also announcing to clear all applications received by March 31, 2013 as against the previous deadline of September 30, 2012. "The final dates when the campaign would be held are yet to be finalised but the government will announce them soon. More than 1.50 lakh families will benefit from the regularisation campaign," said state parliamentary affairs minister Rajendra Rathore.


He said the campaign would be taken forward from where it was left in 2012. "The applications would be duly verified. Legal action would be taken against forged applications," he said. The BJP government, after coming to power in December 2013, decided to begin the campaign again in 2014 ahead of the Lok Sabha elections but it could not materialise.

The minister also announced the much-awaited Nursery Teachers Training (NTT). "The state will soon begin the recruitment process for 1,148 posts. These teachers will be eligible to teach in pre-primary schools," said Rathore.

The cabinet, during its long meeting which lasted for about five hours, also reviewed the decisions taken during the previous meetings of the cabinet. Sharing details, Rathore said the cabinet had taken 173 decisions in its 2014 meetings, of which 162 were implemented, while 11 are underway.

"Similarly, in 2015, of the 148 decisions cleared by the state cabinet, 89 have been implemented while 59 are in the process. This is the first time that the state cabinet reviewed its own performance and the status of the decisions taken," said Rathore.

OVER 1.5 LAKH FAMILIES TO BENEFIT



JMC has around 30,000 applications for regularisation

- **Prashasan Shehron Ke Sang Abhiyaan to be re-launched**
- **JDA, in 2012, prepared a list of 1,722 housing schemes developed before 1999**
- **Prithviraj Nagar itself has about 900-1,100 colonies that need to be regularised**
- **As many as 60,000 plots need to be regularised by Jaipur Development Authority**
- **Kachchi Basti will also be included in the list of regularisation**

The ministers also reviewed the state's 'Nyay Apke Dwar' programme as part of which Revenue Lok Adalats were held across the state between May 18 and July 20. "More than 20.37 lakh revenue-related cases, several of them pending for decades, were resolved during this campaign. 61 gram panchayats in the state are free of any pending revenue cases," said the minister.

Farmers 'club' to grow organic vegetables

MADURAI: In a unique move, a group of farmers in Madurai district on Monday floated a 'club' to grow vegetables using only organic farming techniques.

These 20 farmers in Nariyampatti — 30 km away from Madurai city, who formed the club, named it Colonel Pennycuick Farmers' Club after the British engineer who constructed the Mullaperiyar dam.

The village in Chellampatti block mostly produces vegetables such as brinjals, drumsticks, ladies finger, tomatoes, onions and greens. Flower crops like jasmine, tuberose and fodder crops for milch animals are also cultivated.

Till date most cultivators in the village used chemical fertilisers and pesticides. "We have fully moved away from chemical pesticides and have started organic farming through our club," said P Boominathan, co-ordinator of the club.

With the Kerala government tightening its noose on excessive use of pesticides on vegetables in Tamil Nadu, these farmers has realised that time has come to change their farming practices. "We have started learning modern organic farming methods. We have to change fast," he said.

Another important aim of this club is to release farmers from the clutches of middlemen. "No matter how hard we work in our fields, the middlemen take away our harvests giving us paltry sums. We want to market our own produce," said N Murugan, a farmer of the club cultivating drumsticks in 3.5 acres of land.

To that end, the farmers are contemplating on roping in youngsters from the village to market the vegetables. A Anbuselvan, who cultivates brinjals in five acres of land, said the club will package the vegetables and deliver to houses directly with the help of youngsters. "We will give them our produce to market. They will get a job while the consumers will get quality vegetables at their doorsteps," he said.

After 11 months of trial period, the club was inaugurated by assistant general manager of National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), K S Mahesh on Monday. "The last 11 months went in building trust among the villagers and bankers. As we venture more and more into organic farming and marketing, we should also grow in size in terms of our membership strength from 20 to 1,000 in the coming days," Boominathan added.

According to agriculture experts, the shift towards organic farming happens among farmers gradually. M Kalyanasundaram, head of entomology department at the Agriculture College and Research Institute in Madurai, said that it was a "very positive gesture" shown by the farming community. He hoped, with courses on organic farming being offered in Tamil Nadu Agriculture University's colleges across the state, this transformation will sink its roots deeper into the farming community.

Central varsity to offer diploma in green farming tech

BATHINDA: University Grants Commission (UGC) has granted a community college scheme to Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, to impart skill-based education at the grass-roots level in the region. Under the scheme, the university would start a diploma course in green farming technology.

P Ramarao, principal, community college scheme, said the diploma would help the university to reach out to stakeholders aspiring for a career in agriculture sector. The community college model would be accessible to a large number of individuals, offering low-cost and high quality education that encompasses both skill development and traditional coursework, thereby providing opportunities to learners to move directly to the employment sector or higher education, he added.

Sunil Mittal, coordinator, community college scheme, said the course had been modelled as per guidelines of national skill qualification framework.

Sowing revives across Gujarat

AHMEDABAD: This week's rains have revived the hopes of state's farmers who, because of delayed rains, had virtually halted sowing last week. In the immediate past week, sowing took place in only 2.32 lakh hectares. Overall, however, sowing has been completed in 50.75 lakh hectares — 59% of the total 85.53 lakh hectares in which farming is done in the state.

Data with the agriculture department indicate that till 8 am on July 21, the state had received only 178.38 mm rain — this is 22.38% of the 797 mm annual rainfall of the season. Overall, sowing had been completed in 50.76 lakh hectares which was 18 lakh hectares more than in 2014 at the same time. Officials said last year also the monsoon was delayed and sowing activity had picked up only in August 2014.

Interestingly, Gujarat's farms had yielded 71 lakh tonnes less cereal, food grains and oil seeds in the year 2014-15 than in 2013-14. The area in which rabi, kharif and summer crops were cultivated had fallen by 32.42 lakh hectares in 2014-15, as compared to the previous year — a fall of 27.21%. As a result, the state's annual agriculture production had gone down by 20.5% during the same period.

Officials fear that this year too, due to delayed rains, agriculture production will decline this year.

Sowing in the last one week (ending July 14) had increased by six lakh hectares in the state and, in the week ending July 21, it had increased by 2.32%. Sowing was lowest in Kutch and North Gujarat region.

Officials of the agricultural dept said that, barring cotton and groundnut, sowing in no other crop had been able to reach over 70% of the average area in which they are cultivated each year.

Tamil Nadu farmers float club to produce organic vegetables

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These 20 farmers in Nariyampatti -- 30 km away from Madurai city -- who formed the club, named it Colonel Pennycuick Farmers' Club after the British engineer who constructed the Mullaperiyar dam, the lifeline of five southern districts of Tamil Nadu.

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According to agriculture experts, the shift towards organic farming happens among farmers gradually. It has been estimated that 5% of farmers in Tamil Nadu are practising organic farming in recent years.

M Kalyanasundaram, head of entomology department at the Agriculture College and Research Institute in Madurai, said that it was a "very positive gesture" shown by the farming community. He hoped, with courses on organic farming being offered in Tamil Nadu Agriculture University's colleges across the state, this transformation will sink its roots deeper into the farming community.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Monsanto expands vegetable R&D centre in India



Farm biotech major Monsanto has expanded its research and development (R&D) facility for vegetable seeds near Bengaluru even as it gears up to roll out new disease-resistant and high-yielding hybrid varieties of tomato and peppers in the domestic market.

Upbeat on domestic turf

Speaking to reporters after inaugurating the expanded R&D facility, Kenneth Avery, Vice-President, Global Vegetable Business, Monsanto, said the Indian market offers major potential for the company to grow its business on the rising consumption of vegetables led by growth in population and increasing affordability.

Avery said the vegetable consumption in India, the second largest consumer after the United States, has been growing at 2-3 per cent per annum, while it was largely stable in the US and Western Europe.

Replying to a query, Avery said that the company has no plans to introduce the genetically modified vegetables in India as the costs of registrations were huge compared to the returns generated by such products.

No GM focus

He also said that the R&D centre here has no plans to work on the GM vegetable varieties.

Monsanto, which began its R&D centre at Kallinayakanahalli in Chikkaballapur district, near Bengaluru, with an investment of ₹25 crore in 2005, has been investing about ₹20-25 crore on an annual basis over the past few years. “We may increase our investments as we bring in more technology and products into the Indian market,” Avery added.

Late entrant

While the company tops the ranks in Asia, in India it is yet to catch up as it was a late entrant in the vegetables seeds business. Monsanto, which acquired Seminis in 2005 to foray into vegetable seeds, continues to sell its product under the same brand.

Monsanto currently is the third largest player in the Indian vegetable seed market after Syngenta and Nunhems, the vegetable seed business of Bayer Crop Science.

“We have been growing at around 15 per cent in the Indian market,” said Prashant Hegde, Asia Vegetable Business Lead, Monsanto. The company claimed to have a share of 10 per cent in the Indian vegetable seeds market, estimated at around ₹2,000 crore and growing annually by a tenth.

Monsanto currently has R&D staff strength of about 50 working on vegetables. "We will have room to accommodate another 30 R&D staff," said VK Kishore, vegetable R&D lead, for Asia.

Kishore said the company expects to soon launch a tomato variety that has an extended shelf life of 14-16 days as against the current variety in the market that can remain fresh for 7-8 days.

The company also proposes to launch a white variety of cauliflower next year.

Now, an online platform for agriculture implements

Taking a leaf out of the success story of Flipkart and the likes to agriculture, Desta Global has launched a business-to-business online platform for selling all agriculture implements including fertiliser, seed, pumps and tractor.

Pan- India reach

DestaMart has already registered 120 dealers and eight companies to sell their products on the portal in Maharashtra and plans to take it pan-India.

The company targets 300 registered dealers and 25 seller companies by August and is in talks to take a solar pump company on board.

Fertiliser dealers gain

With a nominal fee of Rs. 5,000 dealers get to source fertiliser of different companies from DestaMart.

Dealers usually deposit money with fertiliser companies to get rights to sell their products. Instead of making deposit for dealership with different companies, they can now make one payment and sell different brands.

Mohnish Sharma, CEO, Desta Global, said the company receives the orders from the dealers and place them with companies which handle the delivery.

Apart from the ability to access round-the-clock, he said dealers can also make offline payment and get special discounts.

"The concept has been received so well in the market place that a fertiliser company wants to sell all its products only online," he said.

Digital India

Internet penetration in the rural markets has been growing steadily and will get further boost with the Government's 'Digital India' push.

The government plans to connect 2.5 lakh panchayats in the country through online infrastructure by laying out optic fibre of 70,000 km.

“The online market place for agriculture inputs helps us to easily browse through a variety of products and order based on our demand. Pricing is very transparent and is displayed on a real-time basis,” said Kumbhar, proprietor of Satara-based Baliraja Krushi Udyog Samuha.

Wind installations down in first quarter



Wind power capacity additions fell to 319.2 MW in April –June this year compared with 477.7 MW in the same period last year, illustrating the ‘nothing-is-moving’ feeling that pervades the wind industry today.

In private conversations that betray a sense of despondency, wind industry leaders say that they do not see the capacity additions in 2015-16 to be higher than the 2,300 MW the industry clocked in 2014-15.

Issues

The lack of cheer is due to varied issues in the windy states—Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Gujarat. If it were not for Madhya Pradesh, expected to install around 700 MW this year, the industry would be buckling under the weight of poor markets.

Maharashtra, the darling of the industry in 2013-14 when the State set up 1,076 MW of capacity (only Tamil Nadu had done more, and just only once), is today down in the dumps. This is mainly because the state-owned power utilities are not willing to buy power—perhaps because the purchase tariff fixed by the state electricity regulatory commission is rather high

at Rs. 5.75 a kWhr. For various reasons, the State has not signed power purchase agreements for projects commissioned in 2014-15, says wind power producer, who did not wish to be identified.

Open access

Wind power companies could sell their electricity to consumers directly, but such “open access” is fraught because there is practically no ‘banking’ of power. This means, if the consumer does not consume the power within 15 minutes of the generation, the power is lost as the producer cannot ‘bank’ the power beyond 15 minutes.

In Tamil Nadu, the preponderance of fickle wind power in the total electricity mix has caused the state grid operator to shun it—the state-owned distribution utility prefers to buy steady and dependable power from elsewhere rather than buy now-here, now-gone wind power.

Gujarat is surplus in power and does not want more windmills. In Rajasthan, there are “severe right of way issues” and the state-owned utility is limiting wind power purchase, leaving the producers to sell in the market. In Karnataka, the principal problem is acquiring land—people from outside the state cannot buy private lands beyond a limit, getting agricultural and forest lands is not easy. Andhra Pradesh also has “grid constraints”.

All this flies against Government of India’s target of achieving 60,000 MW of wind power capacity by 2022—over 5,200 MW a year between now and 2022, or twice the current run rate.

Mixed trend in rubber

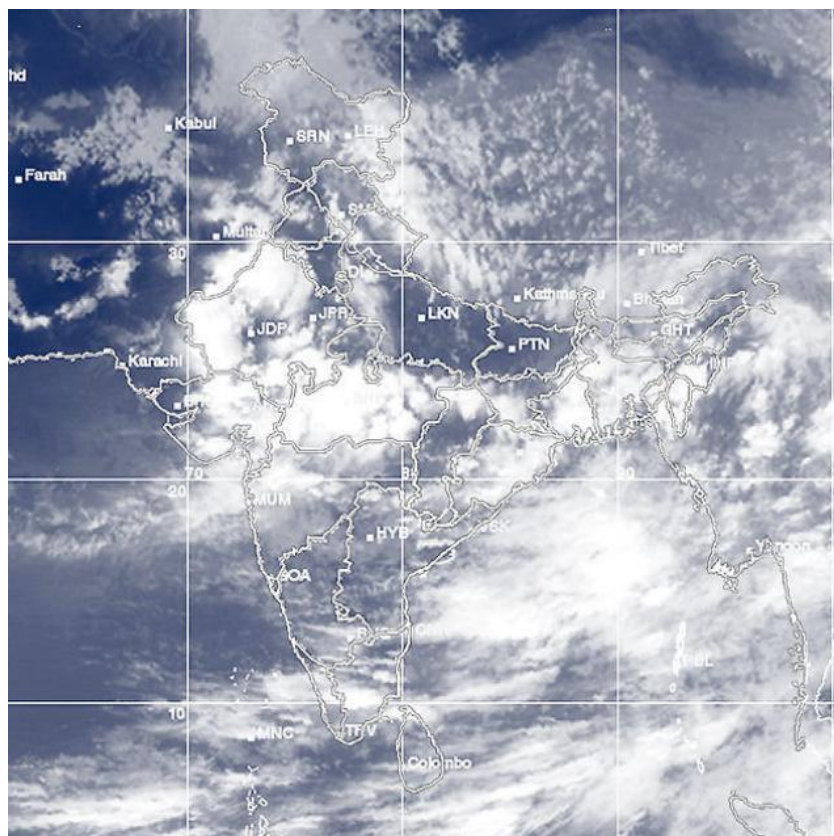
Spot rubber strengthened on Tuesday. RSS 4 closed firm at ₹125 (124) per kg, according to traders. The grade improved to ₹122 (121.50) and ₹125 (124.50) respectively as quoted by the dealers and the Rubber Board.

The trend was mixed while the volumes continued to be low. August futures improved to ₹126.04 (124.57) and September to ₹125.90 (124.87) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up ₹107.03 (106.82) at Bangkok. July futures improved to ¥203.5 (₹104.01) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.



Spot rubber rates (₹/kg): RSS-4: 125 (124); RSS-5: 123 (122); Ungraded: 110.50 (110); ISNR 20: 112 (112) and Latex 60%: 109 (109).

Indian Ocean switches to positive dipole mode; strong monsoon seen for east India



The IOD phase will continue to evolve into the northern hemisphere autumn, according to the latest updates (July-based outlook) of the forecaster made available.

Limited impact?

However, it suggests that the favourable impact (enhanced rain) would be observed largely over the Bay of Bengal and the adjoining eastern parts of mainland India.

This is being attributed to the combined influence of the positive phase of the IOD and the strong El Nino conditions in the central and equatorial Pacific.

Bay overdrive

Already, there are signs that the north and north-western parts of Bay of Bengal is in an overdrive, pushing rainfall in an 'eastern India-first' mode, which is the natural course to take too.

An existing low-pressure area having snaked in from the Bay has travelled west into north Madhya Pradesh and south Uttar Pradesh where it has stopped on its tracks even while raining out all the way.

It continues to persist in the region even this morning doing what it knows best - which is drive monsoon to a peak over west Madhya Pradesh, adjoining east Rajasthan, and the west coast, including Mumbai.

IOD implications

There is a forecast for a follow-up 'low' in the making in the Bay, which should go well with the IOD outlook and its implications for the basin.

The Jamstec forecast has said that apart from most parts of India, Europe, Africa, western Russia, South-East Asia, North and South America, Mexico, Canada, and East Asia will too experience a warmer-than-normal condition, going forward.

August outlook for India pointed to excess rainfall for eastern parts of the country while the rest of the country is likely to witness below-normal rainfall.

North-East monsoon

As for September and October, the excess will be confined to peninsular India. This goes to corroborate the known pattern of a productive and rainy North-East monsoon for the region during an El Nino.

According to the seasonally averaged rainfall prediction, northern India, Japan, Indonesia, Australia (particularly the north) and northern Brazil will experience drier-than-normal conditions over the next couple of months.

On the other hand, most parts of the Bay of Bengal, Baja California and southern Brazil are likely to witness wetter-than-normal conditions, the Japanese forecaster said.

Business Standard

PM to release 'Vision 2050' for agriculture in Patna: Radha Mohan Singh



Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#) will release 'Vision 2050' prepared by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) in Patna on July 25, Union Agriculture Minister [Radha Mohan Singh](#) today said.

"The Prime Minister will be the chief guest at [ICAR](#) foundation day celebrations here and release 'Vision 2050' for agriculture prepared by it to tackle the challenges of future," Singh told reporters.

The ICAR foundation day celebrations is being organised outside Delhi for the first time.

He said Modi will also inaugurate three new projects - Farmers First, Arya and Mera Gaon Mera Gaurav (My village my pride) - to stress on the 'lab to land' concept of the Centre.

On that day, the PM will ask agriculture scientists from all over the country to speed up the 'lab to land' approach, intended to provide new technologies to farmers, which will lead to a quantum jump in agriculture productivity.

The Agriculture Minister said Patna was chosen to host ICAR foundation day celebrations because Bihar has an important place in the history of agricultural research.

The country's first agriculture research and education institute - 'Indian Agricultural Research Institute', then known as Imperial Institute of Agricultural Research, was established at Pusa in Samastipur district here in 1905.

Modi will also award 82 persons including agricultural scientists, farmers and journalists writing on agriculture issues on the occasion. The awards include the prestigious Norman Borlaug Award. He will also provide 'soil testing kits' to young agriculture entrepreneurs.

5 reasons 67% drop in farm suicides in 6 years is far-fetched



With 25 farmers in Karnataka committing suicide in June, it appears evident that rural India is in distress—the long-term cause, a growth rate of almost zero ([0.2%](#)), and the immediate cause, crop failures caused by two years of unseasonal winter rain.

Crop failures = farmer suicides.

That's a familiar equation. But as rural distress grows, farmer suicides dropped 67% over six years to 2014, according to the latest data released by the [National Crime Records Bureau](#) last week.

The data confound the familiar equation and raise five questions, the answers to which provide some explanation of what's going on.

1. **Could the NCRB data be wrong?**

No one really believes NCRB data as credible when it comes to farmer suicides, not even the NCRB.

The number of reported farmer suicides decreased 67%, from 17,368 in 2009 to just 5,650 in 2014, according to the NCRB. In 2014, farmer suicides constituted just 4.3% of total suicides in India, compared with 9% in 2013. This happened because the NCRB changed its data-collection process, and classified farm related suicides under two categories—farmers and agricultural labourers.

6,710 agricultural labourers committed suicide (5.4% of total suicides in India) in 2014.

“The report of NCRB is nothing but a hoax because it has [been] fabricated to show fewer deaths as the distress level on the ground is much higher,” Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS) president Kishor Tiwari said, according to this [Business Standard report](#).

He further added that NCRB has listed all landless tribal farmers and leasehold tenancy farmers as agricultural workers and rural suicides cases have been classified as part of the ‘Others’ category, which has put a question mark on the report's credibility.

Srijit Mishra, a professor at the Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR), Mumbai, said NCRB data represent an under-reporting of farmer suicides. Vikram Patel, a psychiatrist with extensive experience on suicide and mental-health issues, was more direct.

“NCRB figures cannot be trusted at all,” said Patel. “They are massively biased since reporting suicides require proper investigations, and, hence, the process of collating the figures is highly flawed,” said Patel.

“There are two critical aspects regarding the NCRB data,” said Mishra, who has extensively [worked](#) on farmer suicides. “Firstly, the data at the aggregate level are underestimates. Secondly, the newly-created category of self-employed (agricultural labourer) would give the impression that this category was included in the earlier reporting, but this should not be the case for the simple reason that agricultural labourers are not self-employed. This also means that this category should not be there in the 2014 classification under self-employed. Thus, raising the question about who they really are.”

When **IndiaSpend** asked an NCRB spokesperson, he agreed the suicide data were suspect.

“We do have limitations in terms of collecting suicide data, as we completely rely on data collected from police stations in states,” said Akhilesh Kumar, NCRB’s chief statistical officer. “There is not much we can do about it. For the 2014 report, we have tried to revise our proforma and include a little more detailed analysis on profession-wise suicides.”

In May, this correspondent witnessed how the complexity of the suicide-cause-compensation reporting cycle can skew data. In the backward Banda district of Uttar Pradesh’s Bundelkhand region, I [reported](#) the story of a man who attempted suicide because he was not given compensation for two years over crop losses. He was stopped from killing himself by district officials, who promised compensation within three days. Within two days, he was handed a compensation cheque.

The problem was the man who attempted suicide did not appear to be a farmer, according to the district magistrate, who cleared the cheque. The man was apparently drunk when he attempted suicide, but given the publicity and political sensitivity around such incidents, the administration hastily handed over the money. In official data, the compensation has been paid, and a suicide attempt recorded.

2. **Are suicides really declining as agriculture spirals into crisis?**

This is unlikely. In general, farmer suicides are vastly under-reported, with many states—almost overnight—claiming no such incidents, what is called as a zero-reporting contagion.

“There has been an upward trend in cases of farmer suicides in Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Punjab recently, besides reporting of instances in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu,” said a December 2014 Intelligence Bureau (IB) report, [quoted](#) in *The Times of India*, contradicting NCRB data.

There are three reasons for under-reporting:

First, a suicide by a farmer is classified as such only if the farmer’s name is on the land title. That leaves out farmers whose land title is in their fathers’ names, said Maitreesh Ghatak, a professor at the London School of Economics.

Second, female farmers are considered “farmer’s wives” (by custom, land is almost never in their names). “This classification enables governments to exclude countless women farmer suicides”, [said](#) P. Sainath, Magsasay award winner who pioneered farm-suicide reporting in India. As **IndiaSpend** and **Khabar Lahariya** [reported](#), there are about 36 million female farmers in India, and they are in crisis.

Third, some states—implausibly—report no farmer suicides, as the NCRB data note.

Chhattisgarh, reported no suicides in 2011, four in 2012 and none in 2013, after reporting [4,701](#) in the three years before 2011. West Bengal, too, reported no farmer suicides in 2012, 2013 and 2014, after reporting [2,854](#) in the three years preceding 2012.

In 2014, Chhattisgarh reported 443 farmer suicides, the fourth highest among states.

However, Chhattisgarh’s agriculture minister, Brijmohan Agarwal, called the NCRB data “misleading and based on a wrong analysis”. He said, according to this [report](#) in *The Hindu* : “These numbers are wrong, and there are no such incidents in Chhattisgarh.”

The zero-reporting contagion appears to have only spread, as the latest data released last week revealed.

Uttarakhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Goa; all union territories, except Andaman and Nicobar Islands; and the northeastern states, except Assam, reported zero farmer suicides in 2014.

“Farmer-suicide reports are a malicious political campaign,” [declared](#) West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in 2012, the year the state reported no suicides.

Uttar Pradesh, the most-populous state, reported just 63 suicides in 2014, but the official data on farmer suicides is dodgy, as [IndiaSpend reported](#).

3. **What, then, are the real reasons for farmer suicides?**

If, as the IB report noted, farmer suicides display an “upward trend”, and, as some experts suggest, the causes for these suicides go beyond indebtedness, why do farmers kill themselves?

Bankruptcy or indebtedness (20.6%), family problems (20.1%) and crop failure (16.8%) were the leading causes of farmer suicides in 2014, according to the NCRB.

However, attributing suicide to a single reason is too simplistic.

“Suicide is a complex process,” said Patel, the psychiatrist. “It arises out of an amalgamation of factors, hence, we cannot attribute a single reason for suicides.”

Indebtedness is indeed an issue, but crop failure isn’t the only reason that leads to it, contrary to what media reporting and political reaction lead you to believe. Healthcare and education costs and personal expenditure (marriage costs, mostly) contribute significantly to a farmer’s indebtedness.

Outstanding loans for health reasons have doubled from 3% in 2002 to 6% in 2012, according to data from the [All India Debt and Investment Survey 2013](#), released earlier this month by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). The data further revealed that loans for farm business fell by about half over a decade, from 58% in 2002 to 29% in 2012.

The rise in borrowings for health reasons has become a significant factor in the lives of farmers because they lack savings, and government healthcare is substandard. So, farmers borrow to pay bills at private hospitals. More than half of India’s rural population uses private

healthcare, which is four times as costly as public healthcare, and can cost those in the poorest 20% more than 15 times their normal monthly expenditure, according to the [latest](#) NSSO data.

India spends only 1.3% of its GDP on healthcare and faces a healthcare crisis, especially in rural areas. This crisis is likely to be aggravated due to a reduction in the healthcare budget,

“In all the farm households I’ve visited, where people have killed themselves, the single largest component of family debt was health costs,” [said](#) Sainath, the journalist.

The IB report does not acknowledge healthcare at all. It blames “rising farmer suicides on an erratic monsoon (at the onset stage), outstanding loans, rising debt, low crop yield, poor procurement rate of crops and successive crop failure (sic)”.

4. **Do loan waivers, compensation for crop-losses and other aid help farmers?**

Loan waivers are not relevant to farmers who borrow from private moneylenders. This was a view echoed by all the researchers **IndiaSpend** spoke to, as well as the IB report.

The larger issue is declining farm livelihoods. “The development discourse and public policy have to move out from piecemeal approaches that get reduced to income or yield,” said IGIDR’s Mishra. “They have to have a livelihood and quality-of-life focus.”

“Despite state-specific differences, a common thread running across the story of suicides is the adverse implications on the livelihoods and the quality of life of farmers and their families,” he said.

The new NSSO [data](#) substantiate his point. The average surplus income (income minus consumption) of an agricultural household was Rs 2,436 per annum (Rs 203 per month) in 2012-13, which means that a farmer rarely has savings.

The government’s policy of waiving debts is reactionary and cannot substitute for long-term policy, concluded a recent research [brief](#) by Shamika Ravi, Fellow, Brookings Institution India.

With livelihoods so imperiled, suicides are likely to grow. But aside from the reasons we have listed, there is another complicating factor: Media reportage of suicides.

5. Does media reportage of farmer suicides spark copycat suicides?

“Irresponsible” media reports of suicides trigger imitative suicides, said this 2012 [research paper](#) from the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, placing at centrestage an issue the media rarely acknowledge.

The risk of imitative suicide is the highest during the first three days of reporting and levels off after about two weeks, said the study. Educated people, who have greater access to the media, are at greater risk.

“Yes, irresponsible media reporting triggers suicides, and India does need to have suicide-reporting guidelines for media houses,” said Patel, the psychiatrist.

There are several regions in India, such as Vidarbha and Bundelkhand, which gain notoriety for widespread suicides. There is evidence to suggest that the farm-suicide outbreak in India could indeed be a contagion, where farmers are committing copycat suicides, said a [paper](#) by Ravi, the Brookings India fellow.

“There is evidence that students get influenced by social media and commit suicides, but no such study has been conducted for farmers. However, we can generalise across demographics and conclude that media reporting does play a role (but not the only role) in triggering farmer suicides,” said Patel.

Currently, there are no national guidelines for reporting suicides in India by media houses, which often leads to irresponsible reporting, aggravated by pressure for ratings and readership. Globally, very few media organisations have in-house training for reporting on suicides.

[Headline](#), a media-monitoring programme in Ireland, works to promote responsible and accurate coverage of mental-health and suicide-related issues within the Irish media.

“We use two media monitoring agencies and monitor about 35,000 articles annually and store the information in a database and analyze the articles against media guidelines,” said Jane Arigho, Media Project Coordinator, Headline. “We have created our own media [guidelines](#) and put them into a multimedia resource to assist media professionals and students.”

‘Plant short-duration crops in rain-scant areas’

In a bid to deal with monsoon deficiency, the agriculture ministry, in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department (IMD), has suggested measures, including sowing of short-duration crops such as pearl millet, green gram and sunflower.

In the rain-deficit regions, the agriculture ministry has suggested farmers to grow contingent crops such as pearl millet, cowpea, green gram and sunflower. For conserving soil moisture it has also advised mulching in areas where crops have been already sown.

In areas like north-west and east which have received normal or excess rainfall so far during the last seven weeks, the advisory has urged farmers to transplant rice and sow other kharif crops such as oilseeds and pulses.

For the north-interior Karnataka, which has received a huge 37% less rainfall till Tuesday in comparison to the normal benchmark, the advisory has suggested sowing of red gram, sesamum, horse gram, foxtail millet and bajra. Thinning out of excess and weak seedlings in rice crop sown in a row and removal of alternate rows in case of moisture are also advisable here.

In Rayalseema (Andhra Pradesh) where the monsoon has been 26% less than normal so far, the advisory has suggested sowing of contingent crops like pearl millet, cowpea, green gram and sunflower.

The Gujarat region, which has received scanty rainfall so far (58% less than normal benchmark), the advisory has suggested inter-cultural operations, weeding in groundnut, soybean, pigeon pea and vegetable crops and gap filling in cotton to conserve soil moisture and to maintain optimum plant population.

For Marathwada, which is facing an acute rainfall shortage at 49% less than normal, the agriculture ministry has asked farmers to do mulching in crops with crop residue to conserve

soil moisture and provide protective irrigation (drip or sprinkle method) to earlier sown crops like soybean, cotton, red gram and jowar in view of the prevailing water-stress.

For Saurashtra & Kutch, where the rainfall deficiency is at 38% from the normal, the advisory has stated inter-cultural operations, weeding, gap filling and mulching with wheat straw, groundnut shell and available farm residues for groundnut, cotton, sesame, pearl millet and pulses to conserve soil moisture.

Monsoon shortfall at 7%, more rainfall likely soon

While parts of Madhya Pradesh got heavy downpour on Tuesday, India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted monsoon rains over most parts of the country during the next couple of days.

“Heavy rainfall would occur at places in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh, west Rajasthan, east Rajasthan, west and east Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, interior and coastal Karnataka and Kerala in the next few days,” IMD stated in its latest weather bulletin.

According to private weather forecaster Skymet, the intensity of rain would start decreasing from Tuesday onwards as the low-pressure area over west Madhya Pradesh has now weakened into a cyclonic circulation.

“In another 48 hours or so, this monsoon system brewing in the north Bay of Bengal is most likely to develop into a low-pressure area or a cyclonic circulation. After gaining strength, this monsoon system is expected to give good rains over highly rain-deficient regions of Maharashtra including Marathwada, Vidharba and Madhya Maharashtra. It will further travel to Gujarat and give rain over the state and its adjoining areas,” Skymet stated in a statement.

According to IMD, the quantum of average monsoon rainfall across the country during June 1- July 21 has been 331.2 millimetres which is 7% less than the benchmark of 357.6 millimetres arrived on the basis of a 50-year average shower.

On the regional distribution, the north-west region has received 8% excess rainfall than normal benchmark while the central India region has received 14% less rainfall than normal. While south peninsula has 12% less rainfall than normal so far, eastern and northern eastern regions have received 6% less rainfall than normal. The worst hit are Gujarat region (-58%), Saurashtra and Kutch (-38%), Madhya Maharashtra (-33%) and Marathwada (-49%) which have received less rainfall than normal.

Meanwhile, ministry of agriculture which released kharif sowing data last week, had reported more than 62% higher acreage than last year. As against 346.34 lakh hectares sown in 2014-15, this year so far 563.35 lakh hectares have been cultivated with a significant increase in the sowing of pulses, coarse cereals, oil seeds and cotton.

Last month the IMD had revised downward its forecast of seasonal rainfall (June-September) for this year to 88% of a long-period average (LPA), from 93% reported in May. However Skymet, has predicted a normal monsoon, with showers at 102% of the LPA.

Govt sees record kharif pulses, oilseeds, coarse cereal output

The country is likely to harvest a record production of pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals in this year's kharif season on higher acreage under these crops so far despite the prediction of a deficient monsoon.

The previous peak in coarse cereals and pulses output was 33.08 million tonnes and 7.12 million tonnes each achieved in the 2010-11 kharif season, while the record oilseeds output of 22.61 million tonnes was witnessed in 2013-14 kharif season.

The sowing in the kharif (summer) season begins with the onset of the southwest monsoon from June, while the harvesting starts from October.

“There has been a significant increase in area under pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals so far and we expect a record production of these crops,” Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh told PTI.

The prospect of these crops is good and adequate measures have been put in place to reduce the impact of possible deficient rains in some parts of the country, he said.

According to the latest data, area sown to pulses has increased to 5.59 million hectare till last week of the kharif season of 2015-16 crop year (July-June), as against 2.39 million hectare in the year-ago period.

Similarly, area sown to coarse cereals has increased to 10.24 million hectare from 4.76 million hectare, while that of oilseeds has risen to 12.7 million hectare from 3.8 million hectare in the year-ago period.

Singh said higher minimum support price and other measures taken under various programmes has encouraged farmers to bring more area under these crops.

The Met Department has projected deficient rains this year too. It said July and August will receive 8 and 10 per cent less rainfall, respectively.

Higher production in pulses and oilseeds is necessary to boost the domestic availability of lentils and edible oils and reduce the country's dependence on imports.