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THE HINDU

Insect Museum to come up at TNAU



These butterflies are part of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University's collection at the soon to be set up Insect Museum in Coimbatore.— Photo: S. Siva Saravanan

Government of Tamil Nadu provides Rs.1 crore funding for the project

A visit to the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here will soon be incomplete if one does not go to the Insect Museum that is coming up on the University campus.

With Rs. 1 crore funding from the Government of Tamil Nadu and guidance from Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy, the Museum is coming up near the Agricultural Entomology Department.

K. Ramaraju, Director in-charge, Centre for Plant Protection, says that visitors to the Museum will get a peek into the world of insects, which is divided broadly into 29 Orders and has hundreds of thousands of insect species.

The Museum will have specimens from the Coleoptera Order, the largest family of the 29 orders and comprises beetles.

Spread over 5,000 sq.ft. and having an audio-visual room, the Museum will have terrestrial, aquatic and those insects that live on plants.

It will have the insects based on agro-climatic conditions and their nature – pests, predators and productive groups. The last include pollinators, honey bees, silk worms and lac insects.

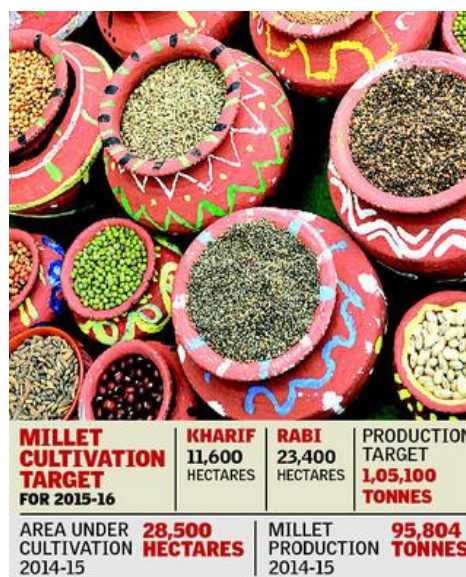
Assistant Professor K. Chitra says that the University has collections since the British days – that of the then Madras Presidency’s Chief Entomologist T.B. Fletcher and Assistant Entomologist T.V. Ramakrishna Iyer.

Mr. Ramaraju says that the Museum will be of great help to students, entomologists, people who study insects as hobby and others.

The Department otherwise studies pests problems in agriculture, horticulture and plantation crops and suggests solutions that include preying on the pests, trapping them, chasing them way or killing them with insecticides. The use of insecticides will be last option, points out S. Kuttalam, Head of the Department, Agricultural Entomology.

Entomologists power a bulb that is placed between two white clothes, preferably dhoti, and trap the insects that get attracted to light in bottles containing small doses of potassium cyanide

Fillip to minor millets cultivation



The Department of Agriculture has introduced a slew of initiatives to promote the cultivation of Kodo millet or 'Varagu' and Italian Millet or 'Tinai,' which have not been favoured much by farmers for the last few years.

“Most farmers who cultivated these minor millets a few decades back were not getting good prices in the market. But given the current demand for minor millets, owing to people becoming health conscious, we are equipping farmers with value addition training and equipment since the processed millets will fetch them better prices across markets,” said G.R. Sarnath Babu, Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge).

In Madurai district, Sanwa Millet or Kudhiraivali is one minor millet which is extremely popular among farmers in Usilampatti and T. Kallupatti with the crop being cultivated in anywhere between 2,000 to 2,400 hectares every year.

At present, the cultivation of Varagu is encouraged in Kalligudi and farmers of Chellampatti are advised to take up Thinai cultivation. While Varagu is being cultivated in less than 150 hectares, Thinai is sown over 100 hectares only.

Under the State Balanced Growth Fund (SBGF) Scheme, which has been initiated by the Planning Commission, farmers in Sengapadai in Kalligudi block were given special millet processing equipment comprising a de-stoner, de-husker and de-huller earlier this month.

“While the equipment helps in processing the grain, we are further equipping the farmers and women in Sengapadai with value addition so that they manufacture snacks. Millet biscuits, savouries as well as health mixes have become extremely popular in the market and are fetching them good returns,” said Ravi Chandran, Deputy Director (State Schemes).

Besides Sengapadai, the SBGF Scheme was introduced in January in Sivarakottai.

An official said that the millet processing facility had reaped such benefits that they had proposed the opening of a stall selling millet snacks on the highway near Sivarakottai.

Award for Hyderabad-based scientist

City-based senior scientist at the Indian Institute of Rice Research, Shaik N. Meera bags the Lal Bahadur Outstanding Young Scientist Award-2014, instituted by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Market yards to be synchronised online: Minister

Agriculture Minister P. Pulla Rao on Thursday said a uniform license system would be introduced at all the market yards in the State synchronising them through e-marketing tools to ensure better profits to farmers, apart from providing the produce to consumers at affordable price as well.

Mr. Rao, who conducted a surprise inspection at Rythu Bazar, Swaraj Maidan, said Rs.1 crore was spent on development of the rythu bazaar facilitating operations of 234 stalls and in second phase additional Rs.1 crore would be spent on developing the bazaar. During the inspection, he inquired with consumers about the availability of onions at subsidised price of Rs.20 a kg at the bazaar.

The Minister informed that 5 metric tonne onions were procured from other States and each family was being offered two kg of onions at the rythu bazaars. Speaking to media persons, Mr. Rao said plans were afoot to set up new bazaars at Samarlakota, Mandapeta, Chilakaluripeta and Kuchipudi, besides more mobile rythu bazaars.

‘UPA-II responsible for plight of farmers’



BJP Kisan Morcha national general secretary Sugnakar Rao addressing a meeting of workers in Belagavi on Wednesday.— PHOTO: BY P.K. BADIGER

BJP Kisan Morcha's general secretary Sugnakar Rao held the previous UPA government responsible for farmers' suicides in Karnataka and other parts of the country.

Addressing workers at a meeting organised by the district unit of the Kisan Morcha here on Wednesday afternoon, he attributed the farmers' woes to the wrong policies pursued by the Congress.

Price control

The Congress failed to control prices, particularly of farm inputs such as fertilizers, and to ensure better prices for agricultural produce, he said.

In Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had not taken any concrete measure to address farmers' suicides.

"We all have gathered here because the government in Karnataka failed to protect the lives of hapless farmers.

"We need to awaken the Siddaramaiah-government from deep slumber," he stressed. He said BIP leaders from the State, along with Kisan Morcha's national president Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, would meet families of farmers who committed suicide and try to build confidence in them. He promised that "achhe din" (good days) would come in the lives of farmers, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi was working on measures to improve financial conditions of farmers.

BJP (Rural) district president Eranna Kadadi and officer-bearers of the State and district units of the Kisan Morcha were present.

Ensure facilities reach farmers: DC

Deputy Commissioner S.T. Anjan Kumar has instructed the officers to ensure that facilities under Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) reach small and medium farmers in the district as it would help them in continuing agricultural activities.

Speaking at a meeting of officers held here on Wednesday to review the progress of SCP and TSP, he said that farmers in the district are committing suicide owing to increasing debt due to adverse climatic conditions.

If the officials concerned ensure proper facilities under these schemes, the number of suicide incidents can be reduced.

The officials of Agriculture Department informed the meeting that a total of Rs. 1.72 crore was released under these schemes, in which Rs. 1.48 crore has been spent on providing facilities for 5,561 farmers. The facilities include — providing seeds and fertilizer to farmers at subsidised rates, drip irrigation facility, soil testing and other equipment for agricultural activities.

‘Funds not released’

Officials of Animal Husbandry Department said that in the current financial year, the target has not been set for these two schemes and the funds are also not released.

In the last financial year, the department had distributed a total of 304 cows and dairy farming equipment to farmers under these schemes.

Deputy Commissioner S.T. Anjan Kumar informed that a total of Rs. 46 lakh has been released for providing taxis for eligible Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe community members. Steps should be taken to provide 23 taxis to eligible youth by the end of next month, he added.

Dairy sector in revival mode in Kottayam

Increase in milk production in first quarter of this fiscal

Milk production in the district has registered a quantum jump in the first three months of the current financial year, making it self-sufficient, both in the case of milk and fodder production.

Tom C. Antony, Deputy Director, Department of Dairy Development, said the average milk production which stood at 81,944 litres a day during 2014-15, had jumped to 95,000 litres a day during the first three months of the financial year.

The sudden fondness for dairy sector could be attributed to the slump in traditional agriculture sectors such as rubber, coconut, paddy, and so on.

“More than 80 per cent of the milk production can be attributed to marginal farmers (who own less than five cattle heads). For them, dairy sector has emerged as an alternative source of income in the face of dwindling returns from their traditional vocations,” he said. On an average, every primary cooperative in the dairy sector disbursed Rs.3 lakh to Rs.5 lakh a week as payment to the dairy farmers. Another important achievement was a 50 per cent increase in the representation of women in the sector. The representation of Scheduled Castes too had increased to 20 per cent, Mr. Antony said.

The dairy sector in the district was dominated by 250-odd primary dairy cooperatives whose membership varied from 200 to 1,000 members. The success in the sector could be attributed the better coordination among the Dairy Development Department, the cooperatives, and the local bodies.

One major concern for the marginal farmers in the dairy sector was the lower level of productivity, especially when compared to large-scale producers. Mr. Antony said the average productivity of a cow in the district had been put at seven litres a day. “However, large-scale producers have the facilities to keep them in more ideal conditions resulting in higher productivity,” he said. They focused on door-to-door delivery which could fetch them on an average Rs.5 additional income a litre.

Revolving funds

District panchayat president Nirmala Jimmy told *The Hindu* that the local bodies had taken a focussed effort in the dairy sector. This year the district panchayat had allocated Rs.50 lakh for providing revolving funds to the primary cooperatives, she said.

Computerisation of the cooperatives had been progressing and nearly 150 cooperatives had already been computerised. Projects for modernisation of the primary societies and farms and production of value-added dairy products were top on the agenda of the district panchayat, she said.

- *Alternative income source for marginal farmers*
 - *Up to Rs.5 lakh disbursed a week as payment to farmers*
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Need innovation to raise farm productivity: Rangarajan

Decline in agricultural production is of concern as more than 50 per cent of the population living in rural areas depend on it, said C. Rangarajan, former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

Though agriculture contributed only 18 per cent to the national growth even a small shortfall in food production seriously upset the economy, he said, calling for a mechanism to control food inflation as in the last four years even a small shortfall in production had caused grave disruptions in the economy.

It required innovations, be it hybrid seeds or fertiliser use to bring about a quantum jump in productivity. With landholdings depleting and farm wages rising everyday, he said the challenge was how to reconcile to these problems.

He was speaking at a function to felicitate Member of Parliament M.S. Swaminathan who released a report on how he spent funds received under the Local Area Development Scheme. He praised Dr. Swaminathan on putting to good use the MPLADS funds and presenting a performance budget.

Dr. Swaminathan said under the scheme he had received Rs. 18 crore for a period of six years. Since he was a nominated MP he could use the funds to benefit sections of people across the country. A total of 74 projects were taken up across 10 States.

The funds were used to improve school infrastructure, develop community centres, libraries, build roads, check dams, bus shelters, and electrification of villages.

MNREGA comes as boon to farmers, landless labourers in this village

Honna Kiranagi GP takes up work on planting saplings



Landless agricultural labourers digging trenches for planting saplings at Honna Kiranagi village in Kalaburagi taluk.— Photo: Arun Kulkarni

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) has come as a saviour for hundreds of agricultural labourers and small and marginal farmers in Honna Kiranagi village in Kalaburagi district.

As farmers were not able to take up sowing for the kharif season owing to the failure of the south west monsoon this year, landless agricultural labourers and small and marginal farmers were the worst hit. With no employment available in agriculture fields, the landless labourers were left with no other alternative but to migrate to urban pockets in search of jobs.

Then came the decision of the Honna Kiranagi Gram Panchayat to take up the work on planting saplings on the boundary of the proposed super-critical thermal power plant on the outskirts of the village. It has opened up employment avenues for nearly 600 workers a day.

Besides digging trenches for planting three rows of saplings, the Forest Department has taken a decision to dig a 6 ft x 2 ft trench to store rain water to retain moisture on the land.

Parvathi Bai, an aged agricultural labourer, told *The Hindu* that but for the work taken up under the MNREGA, a majority of landless agricultural labourers would have migrated to bigger cities.

Suvarna, a home maker and an agricultural labourer, said that this year she did not get even a single day's work due to the failure of the monsoon. "This year is a bad year for us...we don't know what future holds for us....," she said.

Chandrakant and his wife Siddavva had migrated from Gobbur village in Afzalpur taluk to Honna Kiranagi in search of jobs. The work taken up under the MNREGA has come as a blessing in disguise to them.

Honna Kiranagi was one of the few villages in Kalaburagi district known for its prosperity due to the fertile land in and around the village. After the acquisition of over 1,600 acres of land for the proposed thermal plant and another 2,000 acres for the proposed cement plant, the village is practically left with no agriculture land for tilling, as per official records.

However, agriculturists who had lost their land continue to cultivate on their land as neither the thermal plant nor the cement factory had come into existence.

Dig into your pockets for onions

Shortage of onions due to crop failure cause by unseasonal rain has led to skyrocketing prices in the market. The price of onions shot up to Rs. 60 a kg in the retail market, up by at least Rs. 30 in the last two weeks.

The State is seeing more than 15 per cent deficient monsoon. The situation is just as bad outside the State, as the crop has failed across the country. Balakrishna, president of the Onion and Potato Traders' Association, said that at this time of the year, onions are expected to come from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. "However, the supply has dropped to less than 30 per cent of normal supply," he said. The only place from where onions are coming in at present is from Challakere in Chitradurga district. "However, there too, the yield is lower by at least 50 per cent, because of hailstones earlier this year," he said.

TS releases Rs. 2,043 cr for loan waiver

The State Government on Thursday issued budget release order for an amount of Rs.2,043 crore as the second tranche of the second instalment of crop loan waiver scheme announced last year.

Budgetary provision

In the GO issued, Secretary (Institutional Finance) K. Ramakrishna Rao stated that the amount was released as part of the budgetary provision made in 2015-16 for the purpose. The government released similar amount of Rs.2,043 crore on June 20. It leaves a balance of Rs.164 crore to meet the entire amount required for the second instalment of crop loan waiver of Rs.4,250 crore.

Training in beekeeping launched in Kasaragod



Central Plantation Crops Research Institute Director P. Chawdappa addressing a training session on beekeeping at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Kasaragod on Thursday

A training programme on beekeeping held here has called upon farmers to come forward to set up bee colonies in crop gardens to help generate additional revenue and facilitate pollination process in ecosystem to enhance production.

Multiple advantages

Inaugurating the programme, jointly organised by the HortiCorp Thiruvananthapuram and the Kasaragod Rural Development Society at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) on Wednesday, Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) director P. Chawdappa highlighted the multiple advantages of setting up bee colonies in the crop gardens.

He lauded the participants for expressing interest to get trained in various aspects involved in setting up of bee keeping units in their farms.

The training which has both theoretical and practical sessions would be held once in a month for the next one year.

As many as 62 persons including youths and women from rural belts took part in the training session.

Watered by sea, veggies grow lush

'In diluted form, seawater is among the best fertilizers'



Seawater is anathema to most plants providing food for man. If irrigated with seawater they shrivel and die within days. But in a diluted form, seawater is one of the best fertilizers for plants, says a career consultant at Ramankulangara, Antony J. John.

Mr. Antony's 50-sq ft vegetable farm on the terrace of his house supplies sufficient vegetables each day for the two-member family. The main fertilizer is seawater. The trick is to dilute seawater with fresh water on a ratio 1:10.

He has a water tank on his terrace in which he mixes five litres of seawater with 50 litres of freshwater to irrigate crops.

He says seawater contains 92 micronutrients for plants which are not available in land. Mr. Antony lives close to the sea and views seawater as a perennial fertilizer source. He says he was compelled to start a vegetable farm when he learnt about the high pesticide residue in vegetables entering the markets from neighbouring States.

"My terrace farm is giving us safe and healthy food," he says. He got the idea from the Internet when he read about Mayard Murray, a pioneer in using seawater as fertilizer.

A star attraction of Mr. Antony's farm is kale (*Brassica oleracea*) counted among the healthiest foods globally.

‘Green meat’

It is nicknamed ‘green meat’ and he is the only farmer in these parts growing kale. The seeds were imported from Europe and the plant grows well with seawater as fertilizer.

Farmer destroys mulberry crop following cocoon price crash

Sericulturists attribute woes to cut in import duty on raw silk



Crop expected to fetch Rs. 1.5 lakh this year was sold for Rs. 63,000.—
PHOTO: VISHWA KUNDAPURA

After the State witnessed farmers destroying sugarcane crop in their fields in view of their problems, it now appears to be the turn of sericulture farmers.

As a token of protest against the alleged failure of the government to save sericulture farmers from incurring losses, a farmer in Chickballapur district destroyed mulberry crop cultivated on two acres.

Venkateshappa, of Jatavara village, was worried about the fall in silk cocoon prices. He has been cultivating mulberry on 4.5 acres for about a decade. This year, the crop fetched only Rs. 63,000 as against the expected income of Rs. 1.5 lakh. This prompted him to destroy the crop. He hired an earthmover and removed the crop grown on two acres. “If the situation doesn’t improve in the near future, I will uproot the remaining crop too,” he said.

Sericulture farmers in various parts of Karnataka are protesting the cut in import duty on raw silk, which they blame for their woes, as demand for domestic silk came down substantially and prices crashed.

Both the Centre and State government should understand the gravity of situation and initiate steps to improve the cocoon rate. Else the sericulture sector will face a crisis and cultivators will be left in the lurch

C. Gopinath

Secretary, Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha, Chickballapur district unit

State seed farm at Pongalur gets new status



State Seed Farm at Pongalur in Tirupur has been identified by State Government now as model farm and technology demonstration centre. —Photo: R. VIMAL KUMAR

State Seed Farm at Pongalur has been recognised as model farm and technology demonstration centre by the State Government for ensuring timely distribution of quality seeds of various crops produced through good agricultural practices to farmers with an 'extra thrust' on maize crop.

Accordingly with the new status, the facilities at the Pongalur seed farm are going to be enhanced by leaps and bounds in different phases.

Initially, the Department of Agriculture has planned to strengthen the irrigation sources and water management strategies, improve the soil health, provide additional Information Technology (IT) resources and widen the dissemination of technology to farmers at a total project outlay of nearly Rs 22 lakh.

“The expenditure for the development works will be taken from the corpus the created by the Union Government under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana,” Joint Director of Agriculture R. Kanagasabai told *The Hindu* . During the initial phase of development, drip irrigation facilities will be laid on an area of 15 acres out of the total 39.5 acres of space available on the seed farm premises and one sprinkler will be set up. Apart from this, two wells on the campus will be deepened to increase its storage potential. “We are also going to introduce a 60 HP (horse power) tractor fitted with 'boom spray' that is capable of spraying insecticides, with Rs 8.93 lakh from the total project cost earmarked for the purpose,” said agriculture department officials. Mainly, certified seeds of maize and cholam, and foundation seeds of pulses varieties like green gram and black gram, and oil seeds, apart from few other crops will be raised in the coming days at the Pongalur seed farm.

Tobacco farmers seek bailout package from Centre

Say will quit tobacco cultivation if Centre offers a decent sum to dismantle barns

Farmers under the banner of the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam (APRS) on Wednesday urged the Centre, which wanted to phase out tobacco cultivation, to help them quit tobacco cultivation by offering a decent package for dismantling tobacco barns.

After taking stock of the situation arising out of downsizing the tobacco crop size for 2015-16 from 172 million kg to 120 million kg by the Tobacco Board, APRS Prakasam district secretary D.Gopinath told a press conference here that farmers would be able to break even only if they were allowed to produce 4,000 kg per barn for curing.

Contending that the market sentiments had not improved especially in the traditional tobacco growing areas -- Southern Light Soil (SLS) and Southern Black Soil (SBS) -- even after the intervention by Union Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharam, YSR Congress farmers wing district convener M. Subba Reddy demanded that the Centre announce Rs. 10 lakh per barn as compensation to the farmers willing to dismantle the barns.

“In the present situation, farmers are ready to switch over to other crops if they are offered decent compensation by the Centre for dismantling part of the tobacco barns on which they invested heavily,” he added.

The Tobacco Board should reconsider its decision to restrict the quota per barn to 3,400 kg in SLS and 3,200 kg in SBS, said All India Kisan Mazdoor Sangh State secretary Ch.Venkateswarulu.

Prices plummet

Quoting the status report brought out by the Tobacco Board, the ryot leaders said as on July 24, 76.48 million kg was marketed at an average price of Rs. 106.28 per kg as against 138.36 million kg marketed at Rs. 119.57 per kg the same day last year. The average price realised during the week ending July 24 was Rs. 94.22 as against the price band of Rs. 95 to Rs. 99 agreed upon by the trade at the behest of the Union Minister. Farmers in Podili II had been worst sufferers with the average price plummeting to Rs. 89.73 per kg, they added.

Cauvery water reaches Tiruchi

Extra water released from Mettur in view of Aadi Perukku



Youngsters enjoying a dive at Mukkombu.— PHOTO: M. SRINATH

People of the delta region will be able to celebrate *Aadi Perukku* with a traditional dip in the Cauvery as the additional quantum of water released from the Mettur reservoir reached Upper Anicut (Mukkombu) on the outskirts of the city on Wednesday.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa has ordered the release of an additional 4,000 cusecs from Mettur reservoir from Sunday till August 3, the day when *Aadi*

Perukku will be celebrated. The Chief Minister ordered the release based on requests from the people in the Cauvery delta to increase the water release.

Following this, the discharge from the Mettur reservoir was increased to 6,000 cusecs. On Wednesday morning, about 3,000 cusecs was realised at Mukkombu and the realisation is expected to increase gradually. The water being let out in the Cauvery from the Upper Anicut meandered its way past the city by evening.

People living downstream will be able to celebrate *Aadi Perukku* with traditional fervour on the banks of the river.

It would avert the need for civic bodies such as the Tiruchirapalli City Corporation to install temporary borewells and showers on the riverbed as had been done in the past when the river was dry.

Meanwhile, with the water level at the Mettur reservoir crossing the 95 feet mark, farmers are anxiously expecting an announcement from the government on the opening of the dam for irrigation for taking up samba crop.

“We expect the government to release water for irrigation next month. Meanwhile, the water released now should be used to release water in the 17 irrigation canals where standing crops such as banana, sugarcane and betelvine require a wetting urgently,” said N. Veerasekaran, Ayyan Vaical Pasanatharar Sangam.

Onion price brings tears to consumers



People making a beeline for buying onions at subsidised price at PWD Rythu Bazar in Vijayawada on Wednesday.- Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

Rising prices of onions has brought tears in the eyes of people making them seethe with anger. The State government, which is worried over spiralling

prices of poor man's vegetable, has asked the Marketing Department to supply onions at Rs. 20 a kg when its prices are hovering around Rs. 40 a kg in open market.

The officials blame the price rise on poor rainfall this year. Decline in crop area and yield and exports are other reasons fuelling the price rise. But, the fact is that the price of the bulb has been increasing since 2008. At the same time, availability of onions at Rythu Bazaars is also declining.

The average price of onions was Rs.9 a kg in July 2008 and was Rs. 10 a kg in the following year. The price touched Rs. 35 a kg in July 2014. The price went as high as Rs. 50 a kg in September 2013. These were the prices registered in Rythu Bazaars across the State.

And, this is not first time that there is a mismatch between demand and supply. Since 2008, the arrivals at Rythu Bazaar are on a declining trend. From 40,885 quintals in July 2008, onion availability at the bazaars has come down to 38,906 quintals in July 2012 and 35,820 quintals in the following year. The arrivals went down to 34,477 quintals in 2014. It further slipped to 26,116 quintals in 2015.

“We procured 200 tonnes of onions on Tuesday. Another, 200 tonnes would be procured soon,” said Venkata Ramana, General Manager of the Marketing Department. Onions would be supplied at the Rythu Bazaars until the prices were stabilised, he said. A.P Rythu Sangham State joint secretary J. Prabhakar said onion yield was dwindling due to non-availability of water.

Conference on linking of rivers tomorrow

A round table conference of heads of various religious institutions in Bagalkot, Belagavi, Gadag and Dharwad districts has been convened to discuss the issue of linking of Malaprabha and Mahadayi rivers.

It will be held at Karnataka Vidyavardhak Sangh premises at Dharwad on Saturday at 12 p.m.. The seer of Lingayat Panchamsali Peeth Kudalsangama Sri Jayamrityunjaya Swami has invited, through the media, the heads of all religious institutions, besides leaders of farmers organisations, sitting and

former legislators, parliament members and Ministers of the region, according to a release issued here on Thursday.

Panel to help youth, ryots set up grid-connected solar PV power plants

The Telangana Government on Thursday constituted a nine-member coordination committee to operationalise the Centre's scheme for unemployed youth and farmers to establish grid-connected solar PV power projects in the State.

The Centre has allotted Rs.233 crore to Telangana as Central Financial Grant at Rs.50 lakh per MW for an allocated capacity of 467-MW for establishment of grid-connected solar PV power projects located near 11KV, 33KV, 66KV or 133KV (if applicable) power sub-stations to promote distributed generation of solar energy under Solar Scale-up Plan of 1,00,000-MW. The committee to be headed by Secretary to the Energy Department would have Managing Director of New and Renewable Energy Development Corporation as its convenor. It would tie-up and ensure coordination among various departments/agencies such as banks, discoms and others for implementing the scheme effectively.

It would further ensure that unemployed youth and farmers in the identified areas are transparently selected for the scheme. The beneficiary youth and farmers would be helped by the committee in getting the land identified, financial closure through banks and guide them in setting up projects.

Coconut oil prices shoot up

Aided by demand for the ensuing festival season and efforts by sellers to hold back copra, coconut oil gained Rs. 500 a quintal over three days as the Kochi market closed on Thursday with the price touching Rs. 11,300 a quintal.

Director of Coconut Oil Merchants' Association Talat Mehmood said that import restrictions might have also played some role in the price rise during the week. Copra closed at Rs. 8,100 a quintal on Thursday. Coconut Development Board had advised copra processors to hold back stock in view of a temporary fall in price. Despite the peak season ending in Tamil Nadu and Kerala and decline in the processing of copra due to rains, coconut oil price had fallen. But he warned farmers that the trend was temporary and "demand for coconut oil and copra will definitely increase during the coming festival season".

Sources in Kerafed, apex cooperative for coconut farmers in the State, said that corporate buying had also a role to play in the price rise.

They said that efforts to help coconut farmers had shown good results. The State government had initially promised Rs. 20 crore grant to Kerafed for coconut procurement in view of the declining trend.

IGNOU study centre

The Indira Gandhi National Open University is establishing its study centre at the Krishna District Milk Producer's Mutually Aided Co-op Union Limited in the city. The co-op union is working to offer a Diploma in Dairy Technology course for children of dairy farmers in the rural areas.

The study centre will be launched by Krishna Milk Union Chairman Mandava Janaki Ramaiah in the presence of IGNOU Regional Director B. Rajagopal, said a press release.

Fisheries varsity under construction



The Fisheries University here will soon have a new administrative building at an estimate of Rs. 11.02 crore.

Work on the construction of the building has been in full swing on a sprawling area in the town. It would have state-of-the-art infrastructure. The work, which commenced in February this year, would be completed by February next year, according to official sources. The university is accommodated at Keechankuppam in a building belonging to Customs Department which has planned to expand its administrative section.

The new building would be more spacious and accommodate separate units for the office room for the university. The future expansion of the university had

been taken into consideration with additional blocks. Soil tests were conducted for analysing the design for the foundation for the building, sources said.

Egg price shoots up

The wholesale price of egg was increased by 12 paise to Rs. 3.42 here on Thursday.

Officials at the National Egg Coordination Committee, Namakkal Zone, said that the demand for eggs have increased in North India, and in Kerala. The wholesale price of egg that was Rs. 3.60 on July 1 had fallen to Rs. 3.10 on July 11 and continued to fall till July 24. When demand picked up, the price was increased from Rs. 3.12 on July 25 to Rs. 3.30 on July 27, and to Rs. 3.42 on July 30.

Life is rough for Kodyakkadu fishermen



They collect fish, crab and shrimp in adverse conditions. —File Photo

Imagine squatting in knee-deep sea water for close to six hours under scorching sun or drenching rain with just king fishers and other avians for company. At the end of the daily chore, these fishermen and women of Kodyakkadu near here take home a princely sum of Rs. 150.

The toil of these fisher folk numbering around 100 during peak season and about a dozen during lean days is a saga of severity, combating adverse weather conditions, unfriendly seawater, unseen catch and untold misery back home.

This is a group of small-time fishermen and women who don't venture into the sea or go to work in any establishment, not even for works under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

They set out from their modest dwellings in Kodyakkadu fishing hamlet before dawn to the sea shore from where water is pumped through reservoirs to two private chemical salt manufacturing industrial units some distance between Agasthiyampalli and Kodyakkarai.

Wading through knee deep slush of mud flats to reach the sea water reservoirs where there would be no waves, they squat and search under water with their bare hands for any shrimp or crab. When they feel the fish or crab, instinctively they clasp their fingers and catch the prey.

This job they do for close to six hours every day to collect a maximum of a kilogram of shrimp and a dozen crabs on a lucky day. But those days are few and far between for them.

“Karthigai-Margazhi is the best season for us when we land better grown shrimps and crabs in these regions. Our difficulty would be compounded when rains come. Not that we are happy labouring under the scorching sun, but rains would add to our agony but we won't mind as the catch would be better,” explains V. Sargunam (56) of Kodyakkadu as he returns to the shore and holds aloft his catch for the day.

“We sell our catch every day to small-time traders or even to retailers when we reach the market place at Kodyakkarai. Standing in three-four feet deep salt water takes a toll on our health. But we don't know any other trade for a livelihood and press ahead with this type of fishing in seawater. That's not all as crabs inflict stinging bites before they perish as we don't know immediately when we grab them. All that make for an unpopular work,” rues G. Selvi as she scurries to the market and be among the early birds to encash the catch.

During the season, these fishermen get a maximum of Rs. 300 a day but the daily wading and squatting has definitely taken a toll on their health as could be seen from bent legs and twisted fingers that have turned pale due to sustained exposure to salt water. All for a square meal a day.

KAU to launch fruit-based project in Wayanad

The Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) would join hands with the Hill Area Development Agency (HADA) to launch a multi-crore fruit based project in Wayanad to tap the commercial potential of various types of fruits growing in the hill district.

The proposed project envisages procuring various types of fruits from farmers and to market it after producing value added products from it, P. Rajendran, Associate director of Research, Regional Agriculture Research Station, Ambalavayal, told *The Hindu* .

The project would be launched at an estimated cost of Rs.2 crore by the end of August. The KAU had signed a memorandum of understanding with the HADA in this regard recently, Dr. Rajendran, who is also the head of the Wayanad Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), under the KAU, said.

At Ambalavayal

A fruit processing unit would be set up on the premises of the KVK at Ambalavayal and each procuring centres would be opened at four block panchayat headquarters in the district, N.D. Appachan, vice-chairman, HADA, said.

The climate in the district is quite suitable to cultivate the sub-tropical fruit plants such as strawberry, lychee, avocado and rambutan ,apart from the indigenous fruits, and many farmers have started the commercial cultivation of litchi, strawberry and avocado, Dr. Rajendran said adding that the project would be a great help to the farming community.

The fruit processing unit would have the facilities to process all the locally available fruits including jackfruit, avocado, mango, lychee, plantain, passion fruit and strawberry.

Farmer self help groups would be constituted soon to ensure the availability of fruits for the project, he said. It is expected to provide job opportunities to 100 youths in the first phase of the project, he added.

“We are also exploring the feasibility of constituting a farmer producer company under the project to ensure the availability of fruits and marketing of the value added products,” Dr. Rajendran added.

The project will be launched at an estimated cost of

Rs.2 crore by the end of August.

Youths told to use their knowledge for betterment of villages

Seer advises farmers not to focus on only one crop



Nirmalanandanatha Swami of the Adichunchanagiri Mutt speaking to the family members of a farmer, who had committed suicide, at Dodderi village in Channarayapatna taluk on Thursday.— PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Nirmalanandanatha Swami of the Adichunchanagiri Mutt, on Thursday met the family members of farmers, who had recently committed suicide in Channarayapatna taluk. The seer visited six families and assured them help from the mutt, whenever required.

“Doors of the mutt are always open for you. Farmers, who grow food for the country, should not commit suicide. The mutt has always been with the farmers,” he said. Addressing a gathering of farmers at Dodderi, the seer said that if educated youths returned to villages and use their knowledge for the betterment of villages, then the country could achieve greater prosperity.

The seer stressed that the pattern of agriculture needed a change. “All farmers should not go for only one crop as it will result in surplus production and financial loss for the growers. Farmers should consult among themselves and

sort out these issues,” he said. He appealed to the farmers not to go for grand marriages and curb their expenditures. “If you have any problems from moneylenders, go to the nearest police station and get the matter resolved,” he suggested.

The seer visited Aruvanahalli, Dodderi, Kaggere, Dindaguru, Kuruvnka and Adaguru in Channarayaptna taluk.

‘Farmers may get relief package from Centre’



BJP Kisan Morcha national president Vijay Pal Singh Tomar addressing presspersons in Belagavi on Thursday.— PHOTO: BY P.K. BADIGER

Farmers in Karnataka facing financial crises could expect a better deal in the form of a relief package from the Centre. Speaking to presspersons here on Thursday, Vijay Pal Singh Tomar, national president of Bharatiya Janata Party’s Kisan Morcha, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi had convened a meeting to look into the problems confronting in Karnataka, Maharashtra and a few other parts of the country on August 1.

The Centre was finding ways to prevent farmers’ suicides and provide relief to those who have suffered losses due to various reasons, he said. Teams of the Kisan Morcha had undertaken study visits to prepare a report to present to the Prime Minister for review and take suitable measures to mitigate their problems, he said.

He said that Mr. Modi had appealed to growers not to lose their confidence. Criticising the previous Congress rule in the Centre, he said the party did very little to improve the financial conditions of farmers and remained preoccupied with developing “vote banks” and “land banks”. It was during the Congress rule that the farmers’ suicide assumed a phenomenal proportion. Even the Congress government in Karnataka failed to take due concrete and immediate measures to prevent suicides, he said.

The BJP-led NDA government had earmarked Rs.75,000 crore to the agricultural sector in the Budget and also announced a package of Rs.6,000 crore to sugar industries. But, no such measure was visible in Karnataka, he said. Mr.Tomar met the bereaved families of farmers who committed suicide in different parts of the district. He also visited some of the agricultural fields to see the impact of deficit rainfall on crops.

Mr. Tomar interacted with farmers at a 'Raith Sampark' meeting in Dodwad villages to get feedback on the crises and the measures to be taken.

Deficit rainfall may hit yield of paddy in Srikakulam



Farmers engaged in their work at an agriculture field at Killi Palem village of Srikakulam District. Photo: Basheer.

The situation unlikely to improve in August too say officials. Yield could come down drastically with the lack of sufficient water for fields at the crucial time.

Drought-like situation is spreading fast with rains playing spoil sport in backward Srikakulam District and it may hit the yield of paddy according to farmers. The crucial month of July has come to an end almost without rains.

In fact, the farmers were in an upbeat mood in June with the excess and even rainfall in all the 38 mandals. However, the situation completely changed in July with the deficit rainfall in all divisions such as Srikakulam, Palakonda and Tekkali.

Agriculture activity was badly affected in the entire district due to scanty rainfall. According to the data provided by the District administration, Palakonda Division registered 45 per cent deficit as the division could get 107

mm rainfall as against 201.2 mm normal fall. Palakonda, Veeraghattam, Kotturu and other mandals were the worst hit in the division.

The situation is slightly better in Tekkali Division which got 118.4 mm rainfall as against the normal of 177.2 mm. The same is the case with the Srikakulam Division which received 206.5 mm as against the normal of 156.1 mm. Paddy growing area is expected to come down with the drought-like situation in majority of the mandals. Normally, paddy is grown in 2.05 lakh hectares. Many farmers who have taken up sowing activity in the month of June are a worried lot now about their future.

Many farmers said that yield could come down drastically with the lack of sufficient water for fields at the crucial time. “Usually we get about 30 bags per acre in normal condition. But will come down drastically this time with the deficit rainfall. We don’t have irrigation facility,” said K. Malleswara Rao, a farmer of Amadalavalasa mandal.

“The farmers will also be forced to migrate to other areas if the situation does not improve in a couple of weeks,” said another farmer B. Kurminaidu. The officials indicated that the situation was unlikely to improve in August as Indian Meteorological Department had forecast bad scenario in the entire country.

Amaravati farmers till land in defiance

They are yet to get benefits for surrendering land for new Capital



Farmers sowing paddy near Machilipatnam in Krishna district.— Photo: T. Appala Naidu

Rumbles of discontent in the capital region of Amaravati are beginning to get louder with farmers in this village in Guntur district defiantly resuming agricultural operations on Thursday.

These are cultivators tilling ceiling and assigned lands, which means that they do not have ownership rights in the eyes of the government although they do possess legit documents such as pattadar passbooks.

The tillers of Thullur say Ministers P. Narayana and Prattipati Pulla Rao and Tadikonda MLA Tenali Sravan Kumar have promised them compensation for surrendering the land to the Amaravati project. While not on par with benefits promised to owner farmers, these tillers had been assured developed land and annuity payments if they would cease operations on the land needed for the upcoming capital. Encouraged by the promises, these farmers gave their consent to the Land Pooling Scheme (LPS).

But so far, there has been no official communication from the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) confirming their annuity or other benefits. Having ceased agriculture operations along with owner farmers, they had been sitting idle after the kharif season began.

Their patience ran out on Thursday, on the eve of a cabinet meeting called by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu in Vijayawada on Friday. At daybreak on Thursday, a clutch of farmers rolled out in their tractors to their fields and began clearing up the brush that had grown in their fields since winter.

“We’ve neither here nor there,” said Ch. Ramulu, a 65-year old. “We don’t get pensions like landless labourers in the capital region, nor annuity like owner farmers.”

‘Denied benefits because we are Dalits’

Some of the farmers pointed out that they are being denied benefits because they are Dalits.

Farmers Jetti Lakshmi and Kanteti Veerlankaiah said they had made countless rounds of the CRDA offices seeking compensation. The Ministers’ promises

were oral. The CRDA needs hard and fast rules like government orders to hand out annuities and pensions.

Ceiling land farmers apart, there are about 300 others cultivating 181 acres of assigned lands, which are lands gifted to refugees way back in the past but since sold to others. Technically, such lands ought not be sold. The assigned farmers too are in the same boat: promised but denied Amaravati benefits. Now they too want to get back to tilling.

Moisture adequate for crops: official

Notwithstanding the scanty rains in the district and surrounding regions during July, the authorities concerned are confident that it will not stunt the growth of crops cultivated under rain-fed conditions in Mysuru.

Though the cumulative rainfall in the district for the period in June and July is almost normal, the region has experienced a prolonged dry spell with scanty rainfall during July offsetting the early gains.

However, Joint Director of Agriculture Mahanteshappa allayed fears of stunted growth as most areas brought under cultivation has either cotton which does not require much water at this stage or similar crops.

“Though July was bad as far as rainfall is concerned, the intermittent spell of a few mm of rainfall has helped sustain moisture which is good enough for crops during the current growth stage”, Mr. Mahanteshappa said.

But there are concerns that if the present dry spell continues for another week or so, it may spell trouble for farmers as the crops will have a stunted growth resulting in poor yield.

“We need a couple of good spell of rainfall within the next 15 days”, said Mr. Mahanteshappa.

Short duration crops like pulses that have a gestation period of 90 days were sown during April when Mysuru received good pre-monsoon showers, and they have now been harvested. Despite major dams in the region, area under irrigation is less compared to agriculture under rain-fed conditions.

Mr. Mahanteshappa said sowing has been completed in 2.74 lakh hectares of land, and the crops under cultivation include cotton, tobacco, pulses, raagi, maize etc.

Cotton is cultivated in H.D. Kote, parts of Nanjangud and other areas while tobacco is widely cultivated in Hunsur and Periyapatna.

Stop free power to ryots, says Karnataka farmer

*Farmers may be given more time for repayment instead of waiving crop loans:
Narayana Reddy*



Noted organic farmer from Karnataka, L. Narayana Reddy, was of the opinion that the government should not provide power free of cost to farmers as there was every chance of its misuse and wastage.

“Anything free is bad. Now, the farmers have fixed automatic starters to their motors and do not switch them off even after their crops are watered,” he said and wanted the government to fix a tariff for the farming community too.

Mr. Reddy, who had won accolades for the promotion of organic farming in his four-acre land at Yelahanka in Bengaluru, was on a visit to Karimnagar. In an informal chat with *The Hindu*, Mr. Reddy said the people would not know the value of power when you give it free of cost.

“I am totally against subsidies,” he said, adding the government should also stop the waiver of crop loans. Instead, the government should give farmers more time for repayment of loans and also ensure the crop loans were spent on cultivation only.

Urging the Telangana government to provide remunerative price to the farmers, he said that labour charges had increased by more than 200 times and thus, input cost had gone up by 20 times. The government should adopt the village as

a unit for the insurance scheme, Mr. Reddy added. With regard to farmers' suicides, he said there were many reasons such as corruption in the revenue department, no access (road facilities) to fields, destruction of soil by use of chemicals, loss of humus and bad weather conditions. Interestingly, he also suggested that the government ban the coverage of farmers' suicides in the media.

Expressing concern over the declining humus content in the soil, Mr. Reddy said the farmers should take plantation of trees in at least one-third of agricultural land to control pest, increase of biomass and manure.

Before 1960, the humus content was 3 per cent and now it had come down to .3 per cent in the Deccan plateau, he said. Agricultural science is under the influence of multinational companies who do research to promote use of fertilizer and chemicals which causes more loss to farmers.

Importance of humus

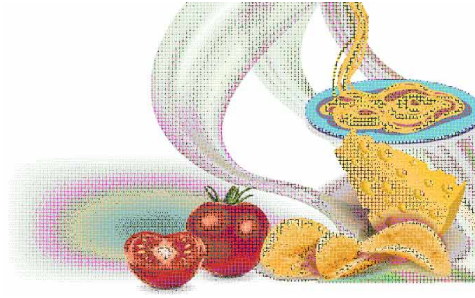
Appealing to the farmers to protect their soil and increase the humus content by growing more trees, he said the government should also launch a campaign on the importance of humus, conservation of water and bad effects of excessive use of water for the plants.

Farmers have fixed automatic starters to their motors and do not switch them off even after their crops are watered



Nestle: FSSAI gave false statement on product application of Maggi

Nestle India also denied accusations by the Maharashtra (FDA) of destroying evidence by burning the Maggi products in bulk.



Nestle India said it had legally destroyed over 1,700 tonnes of [Maggi](#), around 600 tonnes of it by June 15, through collaboration with the FSSAI.

Nestle India, during a hearing in the Bombay High Court Thursday, accused the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) of misconstruing facts about its product application for Maggi. FSSAI had earlier claimed that Maggi's product application stated that the noodle cake and tastemaker were to be tested separately for monosodium glutamate (MSG). Iqbal Chagla, the counsel for Nestle India, Thursday argued that the statement by FSSAI was false.

Chagla said if the two components were to be tested separately they could not be considered in the same category under the Food Safety and Standards (Contaminants, Toxins and Residues) Regulations, 2011.

According to Chagla, the noodle cake would come under the "Foods not specified category" with the absolute MSG limit being 2.5 parts per million (ppm). "The tastemaker would be under the category of "Dehydrated onions, dry herb spices and flavoring", which has an MSG limit of 10 ppm," said the counsel for Nestle. "All reports are below 5 ppm," Chagla added.

Nestle India also denied accusations by the Maharashtra Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) of destroying evidence by burning the Maggi products in bulk. Nestle India said it had legally destroyed over 1,700 tonnes of Maggi, around 600 tonnes of it by June 15, through collaboration with the FSSAI.

Nestle informed the court that it had been sending daily reports to the FSSAI of their disposal process through e-mail along with photographic evidence. “The food authority should confide in the state government,” said Chagla, who was dismissive of the FDA accusing Nestle of destroying evidence.

Chagla further questioned the procedure adopted by the FDA and the FSSAI, saying, “There is no mention of sampling procedure in the reports.” According to him, the rules of the food authority state that a sealed product like Maggi is mandated to be tested as soon as the seal is broken, while the reports of the FDA show evidence that the samples of Maggi were placed in plastic containers between the time they were unsealed and tested. The FDA contested that the samples were placed in sealed containers and were not in violation with any of the FSSAI’s mandates.

Nestle also revealed they had 750 crates of Maggi stored in Delhi, a number which was 2,000 on June 12. Chagla urged the court to not let the ban order affect the manufacturing of the product until it was given sales clearance by the High Court. “We do not want to put any consumer at risk,” said Chagla,

contending that Nestle India would test every existing sample as well as the future stock of Maggi in its own NABL-accredited laboratories before selling it.



CETP underutilised due to shoddy work, says industry

Apathetic attitude on the part of the MIDC authorities and sub-standard infrastructure of the ambitious Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) facility at Waluj may lead industries to face action for not following green norms, fear entrepreneurs. On Thursday, the MIDC sump number 3 was overflowing and the untreated effluent was gushing into the nullah near a pharmaceutical company in Waluj, Aurangabad, polluting the groundwater.

On Thursday morning, a representative of Atra Pharmaceuticals unit observed that sump 3 on the pipeline laid to the CETP was overflowing, and the untreated effluent in turn was getting discharged into the nearby nullah.

"After seeking a stay order from National Green Tribunal (NGT) on July 29 against the closure notice issued to the unit by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), the unit started to investigate the possible cause of the pollution of the well in a farm located behind Atra Pharmaceuticals, as indicated in the report of the M S University report submitted to the NGT," said a representative of the pharma company.

"On Thursday morning an official of the unit noticed that due to inadequate capacity of sump 3, the effluent released by nearby industries was overflowing and getting discharged into the nullah which finally meets a tributary to the Ranjangaon percolation tank. The effluent being pumped was untreated and emanated a foul smell," said a company representative.

He said that probably due to a major design flaw, the treatment is being bypassed and the effluent was not reaching the CETP.

Meanwhile, the unit forwarded a letter immediately to the MIDC regional office bringing the issue to their notice. A copy of the letter was also forwarded to MPCB officials and the CETP. It got the alarm bells ringing in the minds of the members of the Chamber of Maharashtra Industries and Agriculture (CMIA).

The letter stated that no pump house operator was available on site. "Only after intimation to the MIDC, after a few hours the operator responsible for pumping from sump 3 to the CETP arrived on the spot," said the letter.

Waluj Industries Association president and CETP chairman Ashok Chaure said that as per the sump operator, the pumping capacity of sump 3 is inadequate and one of the three pumps is under maintenance and not functional.

Chaure also agreed that the capacity of pumping the effluent is inadequate and needs to be upgraded and also stated that industries too need to release their effluent at regular intervals and not at one go, which may lead to overflow of the sumps.

The Atra Pharmaceuticals said that due to lack of proper infrastructure and inadequate capacity of the sump, the unit is being wrongly blamed for polluting the water, when thousands of litres of untreated effluent is being pumped from sump 3 into the nullah.

According to industrial sources, "The MIDC has laid a 32km pipeline in Waluj which connects the CETP. It constructed altogether four effluent collection sumps (S1, S2, S3, S4) and one intermediate sump. The effluent is collected in S1, S2, S3, S4 and later is pumped to the treatment plant. But the faulty design of sumps and substandard quality of the pipeline is creating a hurdle in the smooth functioning of the plant."

Earlier too a few months back, the MPCB had sent a letter to the MIDC to draw attention of the corporation towards the damaged and blocked manholes due to which seepages of effluents was witnessed and was leading to the underutilisation of the CETP facility at the Waluj industrial area. The board had said that due to such lacunae, the facility that has a capacity to treat 5 MLD effluent every day is receiving only about 2 MLD each day.

Experts too rued that the plant is not being utilised to its full capacity. In fact the plant has a capacity to treat 10 MLD, but unfortunately it was receiving only 1.5-2 MLD effluent every day, they argued.

"After the recent action by the NGT against some polluting industries, the situation has improved and now the CETP plant is receiving about 2.5 to 3.5 MLD," added Chaure.

However, MIDC executive engineer Rajendra Gawde said, "The CETP facility is committed to treat effluent from various industries of the MIDC. Regarding the overflowing sump, Gawde said that the situation is being examined and soon action would be initiated after checking the reasons for the overflow.

He also said that the industries need to release effluent at regular intervals, but that is hardly followed.

"Moreover, the units also need to treat the effluent and then release it into the CETP facility. But after observing the condition of the pumps it looks as if the industries are not maintaining the required parameters as the pumps have been engulfed with silt hence reducing its pumping capacity," he added.

No consensus on support price for sugarcane crop

The Sugarcane Control Board on Wednesday failed to resolve the issue of minimum support price (MSP) for the sugarcane crop in Karnataka for 2015-16.

Cooperation minister HS Mahadev Prasad was present at the meeting of stakeholders, including farmers leaders and officials. The farmers representatives demanded the state government take the initiative and fix a minimum price for sugarcane and clear all pending dues, but the minister said they'll make the announcement only after a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. An all-party delegation headed by chief minister Siddaramaiah is expected to meet Modi in New Delhi on August 3. "We'll decide the MSP based on the outcome of that meeting," the minister said.

On Cubbon Park The cabinet meeting on Wednesday decided to exclude all buildings which come under Cubbon Park from maintenance by the horticultural department. The administration found that maintenance was becoming unwieldy and this job could be done by those who occupy the buildings. The park has the high court, Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum, Venkatappa Art Gallery, Sheshadri Iyer Memorial Hall, the aquarium, Jawahar Bal Bhavan and Press Club. To hand over maintenance responsibility, sources said the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act has to be amended which now stipulates that the horticulture department should look into the upkeep of these buildings.

Paddy yield up 3 times, thanks to Kalam touch

Thanks to 'Kalam touch', farmers of Paliganj 'vitarni' (canal distributaries) in Patna district have been reaping the benefits of agriculture science for over 11 years now.

Patna Zila Krishak Sangharsh Morcha president Ajay Kumar recalled President A P J Abdul Kalam visited Paliganj in 2003. "So impressed was he to see the medicinal plants grown under the Bagwani Mission that he started growing medicinal plants at the Rashtrapati Bhavan," Kumar said. Between 2003 and 2011, Kalam visited Paliganj four times. Every time he sat with farmers and taught them how to increase the yield, Paliganj Vitarni Krishak Samiti (PVKS) secretary Balmiki Sharma said.

The farmers of the area also called on Kalam at the Rashtrapati Bhavan four times to gain farming tips. "About nine quintals of paddy would yield from an acre earlier, but the same went up to 27 quintals with the use of Kalam Saheb's tips," PVKS president and farmer Gopal Singh Yadav said and added Kalam taught the farmers importance of certified seed, duration of sowing the seed and proper storage of the crop.

Catchment areas of dams in dist receive good rain

The catchment areas of major dams in the district like Koyna, Warna and Radhanagari have received good showers so far as compared to the previous year.

As the catchment areas are located in the Sahyadri ranges, the rains have contributed to the dam water levels. However, other areas are still facing a major problem of water scarcity, chiefly because of lack of irrigation facilities and poor rain.

The Koyna dam, also known as the state's lifeline has received 743mm rain since June. Last year, this figure stood at 252mm. However, a Satara district information office report stated that the rainfall in the current season is still lagging behind by 187.4mm of its average record.

The south west monsoon's northern movement was halted by the Ashoba cyclone, which developed in the Arabian sea mid-June. This delayed the monsoon by almost a month, followed by unfavourable weather conditions on the western coast. Meanwhile, the Western Ghats continued to experience showers during that period, while the rest of western Maharashtra remained dry.

Satara district collector Ashwin Mudgal pointed out that showers in the catchment area of Koyna dam is a good sign as it will help store more water for power generation. It will also meet the demand of drinking water for some

villages and Sangli city in the downstream, Mudgal said. "We are now awaiting good showers in the eastern parts of the district, which is in dire need of rain," he added.

Sources in a power generation company of the state government said that Koyna generates around 2,000MW power for the state. Last week, the Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Corporation issued an official statement citing the need for implementation of power cuts in western Maharashtra despite getting a good recovery. The statement has also pointed out that power generation from some thermal plants has gone down, putting pressure on the administration to undertake such measures to conserve power supply.

In Kolhapur, dams like Radhanagari and Warna play an important role for irrigation. Catchment areas are receiving good showers compared to the eastern part of the district, which is still parched. Mohan Atole, the district agriculture officer said, "Though the main crop in the district is sugarcane, which is generally planted in January, some farmers also grow paddy, groundnuts, sun flower and jowar. These farmers face problems of water scarcity. In the western part of the district, where farmers have cultivated paddy, they have started pumping out water from wells and bore wells as an alternative source," Atole said.

U'khand farmers to get free water from canals

In a bid to address the insufficiency of water for irrigation, chief minister Harish Rawat on Wednesday announced that the state would provide free water from canals to farmers. "This will come as big relief to over 20,000 crop growers in the 13 districts of the state," a senior irrigation officer said.

The announcement comes just two weeks after farmers expressed their grouse to the state government, saying authorities were doing nothing to make water available for irrigation. Farmers had said that they could only boost agricultural productivity if adequate water was available.

Rawat, interacting with farmers on Wednesday, made it clear that he had already asked officials in the agriculture and irrigation departments to draft a proposal to grant free water from canals in the different districts to farmers.

"We have suffered with an acute shortage of water for 10 years. This has hampered the growth of agriculture," Mahendra Singh, a farmer from Udham Singh Nagar, said.

Rawat also assured farmers that consumption of electricity for tube wells would be charged not on a monthly basis, but on the basis of the meter reading. A senior Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL) officer said Rawat had directed the UPCL managing director to urge the Uttarakhand Electricity Regulatory Commission to allow farmers to pay their tube well bills on the basis of the reading shown on meters.

Opposition BJP leaders said these moves were being made in a bid to woo farmers ahead of assembly polls in 2017. A senior BJP leader said, "Anyway, we have yet to see how much farmers will benefit," a senior BJP leader told.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Govt ready to raise floor price for onion exports further



To put a check on spiralling domestic prices of onions, the Government is open to raising the minimum export price (MEP) of the bulb further if required.

The Commerce Ministry is keeping a close eye on the movement of domestic prices of onions and will call an inter-ministerial meet if it sees the need for further intervention, an official told *BusinessLine*.

Close watch on prices

“We are constantly monitoring the prices of onion in various mandis and are in touch with the Agriculture Ministry, too, on the matter. If we see further pressure on prices, despite our recent decision to raise MEP, we will take a fresh view on the matter and may raise it further,” the official said.

The MEP is a minimum price stipulated by the Government below which exports of a particular commodity is not allowed.

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade had increased the MEP for onions last month to \$425 a tonne for all varieties from \$250, following the increase in wholesale prices to ₹16/kg in June from ₹12 in May.

Costly bulb

While onion prices fell following the increase in MEP, it has subsequently risen touching a high of ₹ 36 per kg at the Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) on Tuesday.

At the retail level, Thiruvananthapuram recorded the highest price of ₹59 a kg this week, according to Government figures.

In Delhi, consumers are paying up to ₹44 for onions.

Kharif supply

“If the Agriculture Ministry gives an indication that the existing MEP has also been breached, we will take a decision on raising it further,” the official said.

Supply, shipments

The Government is hopeful that onion prices will stabilise in the next couple of weeks as early harvest of the kharif crop has started taking place in parts of Andhra Pradesh and supply from Karnataka is expected soon. India exported

10.86 lakh tonnes of onion valued at ₹2,009 crore in 2014-15. In the previous year, onion exports were estimated at 13.58 lakh tonnes worth ₹2,877 crore.

Indian onion is mainly shipped to countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, United Arab Emirates and Nepal among others.

Rice procurement target set at 30 million tonnes for 2015-16

The procurement target for rice was set at 30 million tonnes (mt) for the 2015-16 marketing year for the 2015-16 Kharif marketing season.

The decision was taken at meeting of State Food Secretaries chaired by Union Food Secretary Vrinda Sarup held here on Thursday.

Arrangements for procurement of paddy and coarse grains in producing States were reviewed with a focus “particularly in decentralised procurement States and other non-traditional States to maximise procurement of paddy/rice and coarse grains during 2015-16 season,” according to an official statement.

“States have also been advised to make arrangements for publicising MSP (minimum support price) fixed, procurement centres opened through print and audio-visual media as well as through pamphlets in local languages,” the statement said.

The secretaries were also requested to place indents for purchase of jute bags in time to avoid last-minute shortages and were also requested to furnish, on a daily basis, the district-wise procurement revenue details of the previous day for the Online Procurement Monitoring System.

Punjab (8.2 mt) has the highest target, followed by Chhattisgarh (3.6 mt), Odisha (2.8 mt), Uttar Pradesh (2.75 mt), Haryana (2.35 mt), Andhra Pradesh and Bihar (2 mt each), Telangana and West Bengal (1.8 mt each).

Spices Board unveils new schemes for farmers

To boost spices production, the Spices Board has launched a raft of measures to support farmers by offering various subsidies and sensitise them on the need to enhance the quality of spices through post-harvest improvement techniques.

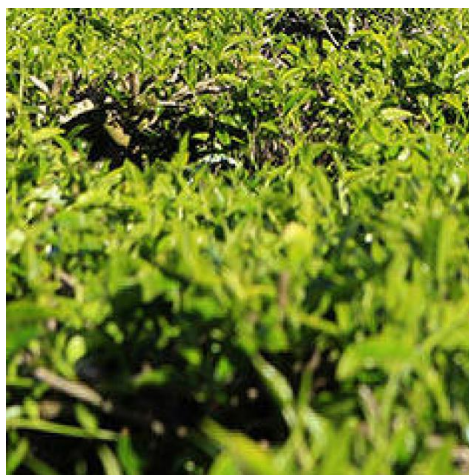
The board has also decided to provide financial assistance to farmers for irrigation, land development, mechanisation, replanting, soil conservation and organic farming of various spices, mainly small cardamom. It will also give financial aid to them for purchasing latest irrigation and farming equipment and tools.

The board Chairman, A Jayathilak, said in a statement that the initiatives are part of the Spices Board's 12th plan to improve export-oriented production of small cardamom and for post-harvest improvement of other spices across spice-growing regions in India. The eligibility criteria for availing the benefits are based on the land held by the grower and is different for each programme.

Under the new schemes, cultivators of small cardamom in Kerala and Tamil Nadu will receive up to ₹70,000 for replanting, while farmers in Karnataka will get up to ₹50,000. They will also receive aid for planting material production.

To help small cardamom farmers in the three southern states in irrigation and land development, the board will provide financial assistance up to 25 per cent of the actual cost for acquiring irrigation pump sets, sprinkler sets, equipment for gravity-fed irrigation system, and up to 50 per cent for water storage structure. Farmers will also get funding up to 25 per cent for soil conservation.

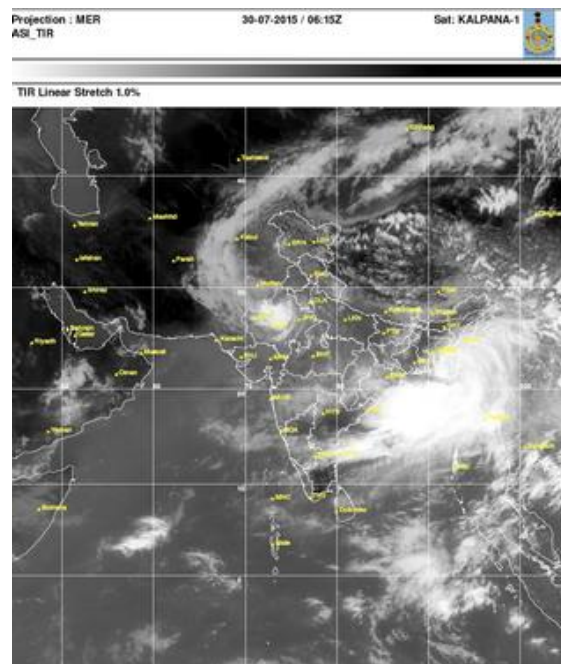
Volume up at Coonoor tea sale



A volume of 19.37 lakh kg has been catalogued for Sale No: 31 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction. This is some 61,000 kg more than last week's offer. Of this, 13.91 lakh kg belongs to leaf grades and 5.46 lakh kg, dust grade As much as 18.10 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 1.27 lakh kg, orthodox

variety. In the leaf counter, only 72,000 kg belongs to orthodox while 13.19 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 55,000 kg belongs to orthodox while 4.91 lakh kg, CTC. Homedale Estate's Pekoe Dust grade, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC market last week when Poonam Traders bought it for ₹201/kg. Its Red Dust grade, also auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, also topped the CTC market when TRP Tea and Commodities bought it for ₹201. Darmona Estate got ₹190. In all, 32 marks got ₹125 and more.

Cyclone 'Komen' set to hit Bangla coast, bring heavy rain to east India



The deep depression over northeast Bay of Bengal ramped up into tropical cyclone 'Komen' this morning and is parked 300 km east-southeast of Kolkata.

The rare July tropical cyclone is expected to cross the Bangladesh coast in the afternoon and weaken, but it could later head towards east and central India.

RARE CYCLONE

The overnight intensification of the deep depression points to strong monsoon flows in the Bay of Bengal, which have been active from the second half of this month.

This is the first cyclone to form in July over the North Indian Ocean after 1989, notes K Srikanth, a Chennai-based blogger and weather enthusiast.

There have been only three occasions when a cyclone has formed during this month here in the past 50 years — in 1972, 1973, and 1989, Srikanth told BusinessLine.

HIGH WINDS, HEAVY RAIN

Meanwhile, the other depression over west Rajasthan retained its overnight strength and is now located over Bikaner and its neighbourhood.

Under the influence of the two weather systems, the monsoon will continue to be in peak form to the east and west of the country.

Gangetic West Bengal, the Northeastern States and Odisha in the east and the plains of northwest India would witness very heavy to heavy rainfall over the next couple of days.

The people have been cautioned about high winds along the Odisha and West Bengal coasts. Sea conditions in the North Bay of Bengal would be very rough. Fishermen have been advised to keep off the sea for the rest of the day.

Trade body expects cotton stocks to swell

The Cotton Association of India expects India to pile up huge inventory of cotton just like China, if the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) does not take measures to offload its stock swiftly.

Maintaining the cotton output at the last estimated level of 38.27 million bales (a bale is 170 kg), Dhiren N Sheth, President, CAI, said the Corporation had procured about 8.7 million bales from farmers as part of the Government's minimum support price commitment.

Unfortunately, he said, looking at the pace at which CCI is selling the cotton, it is expected that it would be left with a sizeable quantity of cotton by the end of the season (in September).

This does not augur well for the country with apprehension of a major support price operation looming large at the start of next cotton season, he added. India's cotton inventory is expected to surge 25 per cent to 7.39 million bales by October from 5.89 million a year earlier. The faulty policy of China led to it holding huge cotton stockpile equivalent to its two year consumption. Though China has stopped procuring cotton from farmers and switched to distributing

direct subsidy to farmers from this year, Sheth said it is still sitting on a huge stockpile which it finds hard to dispose.

“India needs to learn a lesson from China’s mistake and dispose of the cotton lying with CCI quickly, to avoid getting into a China-like situation,” he said.

According to the latest Government data, the acreage under cotton is marginally lower at 9.9 million hectares against 10.05 million hectares in 2013-14 as farmers shifted to other remunerative crops due to low prices of the fibre.

Though the demand for cotton has improved marginally, the prices are almost flat with occasional spurts. Going by trends in commodity futures markets, analysts expect cotton prices to range between ₹4,200 and ₹4,400 a quintal in the coming season. This is slightly higher than the minimum support price of ₹4,050 fixed by the Government.

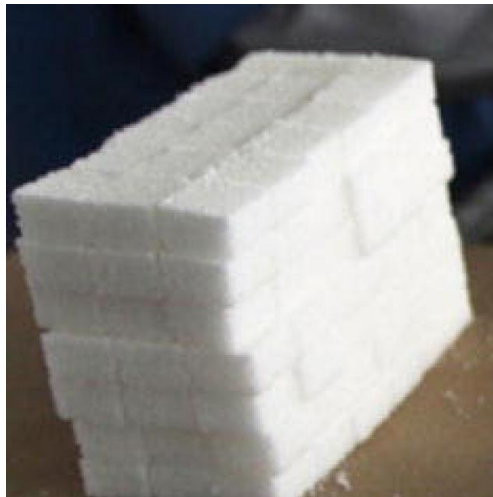
Mixed trend in rubber



Spot rubber showed a mixed trend on Thursday. RSS 4 closed unchanged at ₹122 a kg, according to traders. The grade weakened to ₹123 (123.50) and ₹120 (120.50) respectively, according to Rubber Board and the dealers. August futures inched up to ₹122.55 (122.29) while the September futures slid to ₹121.76 (121.94) and October to ₹121.60 (121.75) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. August futures dropped to ¥194 (₹99.91) a kg on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (₹/kg): RSS-4: 122 (122); RSS-

5: 119 (120); Ungraded: 107 (107); ISNR 20: 109 (110) and Latex 60%: 102.50 (104).

Selling pressure drags sugar



Sugar market witnessed higher volumes at mill level which lifted the sentiment on futures market on Thursday. However, producers sold the commodity at ₹10-20 a quintal lower. *Naka* prices were down by ₹30. Arrivals were at 57-58 truck loads and local dispatches were about 59-60 loads. The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade ₹2,126-2,232 and M-grade ₹2,242-2,372. *Naka* delivery rates: S-grade ₹2,090-2,150 and M-grade ₹2,200-2,320.

Onion soars on poor supplies of quality bulbs; Govt to import 10,000 tonnes

Turning pricey					
At Lasalgaon market					
2015	Arrivals (quintal)	Modal Price (₹/quintal)	2014	Arrivals (quintal)	Modal Price (₹/Quintal)
July 1	14,000	1,551	July 1	15,150	1,850
July 14	7,000	2,025	July 14	9,190	1,850
July 23	10,085	2,550	July 23	4,950	1,800
July 28	10,480	3,600	July 28	9,910	1,725

Source: NHRDF



There appears to be no immediate relief in sight for onion consumers as prices of the bulb have touched their highest levels since November 2013. While

traders blamed hoarding by stockists, experts attributed it to the poor quality of stored onion that is not able to attract demand.

Notably, since the beginning of this month, the modal or average onion prices have more than doubled at Lasalgaon, the major market, from ₹1,551 a quintal to ₹3,600 on July 28. The surge is sharper since July 17, when prices ruled at ₹1,975.

At the retail level, the maximum price was recorded at ₹59/kg in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday, while the minimum was pegged at ₹15 in Gwalior, Panchkula and Sagar, according to the Consumer Affairs Ministry. In Delhi, the retail prices touched ₹44/kg on Wednesday.

Reacting to the price rise, the Government has already initiated the process of imports to ease supplies. A senior official said that 10,000 tonnes of onions were going to be imported from Egypt, Pakistan and China through a tender floated by the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (Nafed).

“There is sufficient stock of onions in the country so there is no cause for worry. Nafed has also floated a tender to import 10,000 tonnes of onions,” he said. Orders are likely to be regulated as per requirement in units of 500 tonnes.

“The extent of price rise is less in northern markets like Uttar Pradesh or Delhi. But prices rose sharply at markets in Maharashtra and other southern region,” said RP Gupta, Director, National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation.

“There is no reason to panic. We had 189 lakh tonnes (lt) of onion production and about 40 lt was stored in the cold storages. But only 25-30 per cent of the stored onion came to market. About 25-30 lt is still stored in cold storages. The price rise isn't justified,” Gupta added. The early harvest of the kharif crop is underway in parts of Andhra Pradesh while supply from Karnataka is expected by mid-August and should help prices stabilise, the official said.

Agriculture experts in Gujarat blamed the poor quality of stored onion for causing surge in the prices. Market players mentioned that fresh arrivals will start not earlier than September.

“Till September we will see supplies from cold storages only. Therefore, the prices are likely to remain firm until fresh arrivals begin around September,” said Hareshbhai Dave, Chairman, Mahuva APMC, one of the largest trading place for onion in Gujarat.

India produced 18.9 mt of the crop in 2014-15 while consumption is estimated at around 16.5 mt. Between 15-20 per cent of output is estimated to have been damaged due to unseasonal rainfall and hailstorms between end-February and early-April.

The supply of good quality onion has almost dried in the market, thereby leading to the offloading of poor quality onion, which was damaged due to unseasonal rains earlier this year.

“This surprises us as exports have been restricted by increased MEP and stocks are there in the cold storages. Quality is an issue but another reason could be the delayed rains in growing regions especially in Gujarat and parts of Maharashtra. And therefore stockists are hoarding the commodity in anticipation of higher prices in future,” Dave added.

At Mahuva market in Gujarat, prices surged from ₹1,125 on July 16 to ₹2,250 on July 29.

It was on November 12, 2013 that onion prices had touched ₹3,500 at Lasalgaon market in Maharashtra with arrivals of 13,395 quintals. On Friday, prices were at ₹2,500 with arrivals of 5,000 quintals.

Rice procurement target set at 30 million tonnes for 2015-16

The procurement target for rice was set at 30 million tonnes (mt) for the 2015-16 marketing year for the 2015-16 Kharif marketing season.

The decision was taken at meeting of State Food Secretaries chaired by Union Food Secretary Vrinda Sarup held here on Thursday.

Arrangements for procurement of paddy and coarse grains in producing States were reviewed with a focus “particularly in decentralised procurement States and other non-traditional States to maximise procurement of paddy/rice and coarse grains during 2015-16 season,” according to an official statement.

“States have also been advised to make arrangements for publicising MSP (minimum support price) fixed, procurement centres opened through print and audio-visual media as well as through pamphlets in local languages,” the statement said.

The secretaries were also requested to place indents for purchase of jute bags in time to avoid last-minute shortages and were also requested to furnish, on a daily basis, the district-wise procurement revenue details of the previous day for the Online Procurement Monitoring System.

Punjab (8.2 mt) has the highest target, followed by Chhattisgarh (3.6 mt), Odisha (2.8 mt), Uttar Pradesh (2.75 mt), Haryana (2.35 mt), Andhra Pradesh and Bihar (2 mt each), Telangana and West Bengal (1.8 mt each).

Food deals site gets another Rs. 50 lakh

Ice-cream chain Baskin Robbins’ India head Sanjay Coutinho is putting his own money in food discovery and deals site Khaugalideals.com.

Kartik Saboo, founder of Khaugalideals, said Coutinho will be making a seed investment of Rs. 50 lakh in the Delhi-based start-up.

Talking about how the website functions, Saboo said, “We have 48 food bloggers and critics who actively blog and write reviews on our website and considering the increasing importance of reviews, we ensure honest and genuine reviews form a part of our website.”

The website, started solely as a food discount deals website in 2012, doubled as a food discovery site which also provides discount coupons at select eateries just over a year ago.

It hosts over 2,000 participating restaurants and eateries across major metro cities.

With a nimble team of just 10 employees, the company offers its services across 9 cities in India.

The website had also launched a mobile application for Android users earlier this year and has received over 9,500 downloads so far. A novel feature of the application is a feature they have named as the ‘Vid View’ feature which lets a user record and upload a review about a restaurant live from its venue. The application will soon be available on iOS by the end of August.

On plans regarding home delivery or restaurant reservation, Saboo said, “We do not intend to start with food delivery options and reservation options at least for a year now, though our competitor has started with food delivery for now, but we plan to stick to providing assured discounts to our users and giving them genuine reviews.”