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THE HINDU

Mediocre turnout on first day of agri counselling



Applicants with their admission letters from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on the first day of counselling on Monday. —Photo: S. Siva Saravanan

The first day of the general counselling at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University saw mediocre turnout.

According to the faculty in-charge of admission, only 20 of the 197 candidates called for counselling participated in the first session in the morning. In the second session in the afternoon, 77 of the 195 applicants called for participated and opted for courses of their choice. The University had wait-listed four candidates. Di. Sivalogesh who scored a cut-off mark of 199 out of 200 was the first to secure a seat. He chose B.Sc. Agriculture on the Coimbatore campus. The second rank holder S. Uma, who had 198.75, chose B. Tech. Food Processing Engineering. The third rank holder M. Sowmiya with 198 cut off chose B. Tech. Horticulture.

The remaining candidates chose B.Sc. Agriculture. In the afternoon session too, B.Sc. Agriculture was the most-preferred course with 69 of the 77 students opting for it. The faculty said the mediocre turnout had to do with the top-ranking students opting for MBBS or other medical courses. Or they should have obtained engineering seats. In the coming days the number of students getting admitted was likely to go up. The University would conduct the first phase of counselling till July 7 and then another phase later to fill up vacant seats. In the counselling conducted for applicants who fell under the 'Differently Aabled', 'Ex-servicemen', 'Freedom Fighter' or other categories, the 32 earmarked seats in B.Sc. Agriculture, B.Sc. Horticulture and B.Tech. Agriculture Engineering has been filled up, officials said.

Little millet to be raised on 200 hectares in Salem

SPECIAL PROGRAMME FOR "SAAMAI" FARMERS



State Planning Commission to introduce this programme in 2015-16.

The programme to be implemented through State Balanced Growth Fund.

Yercaud and Ayothiappattanam blocks in Salem district identified for this project.

Two hundred hectares to be brought under "Saamai" cultivation in 16 villages in both the blocks.

Farmers will be extended assistance in post-harvest management techniques too.

The State Planning Commission has introduced a new subsidy linked programme for the benefit of "Saamai" (little millet) farmers across the state during the current year (2015-16).

The programme, aimed at improving the living conditions of the farmers of the tribal villages by augmenting their revenue through raising "Saamai" crop, will be implemented through the State Balanced Growth Fund (SBGF). The programme was launched for the first time in the State at Vaalavanthi village in Yercaud hills a few days ago. Shantha Sheela Nair, Vice Chairperson, State Planning Commission, launched the programme by sowing the "Saamai" seeds in a field in the village. The Planning Commission has identified two blocks – Yercaud and Ayothiappattanam – in Salem district for the implementation of this programme in the maiden year.

About 200 hectares will be brought under this programme in 15 villages in Yercaud hills (Yercaud block) and in Arunootrumalai village (Ayothiappattanam block). The State Planning Commission has already sanctioned Rs. 30.3 lakh for the implementation of this project in the district.

State Agriculture Department sources told *The Hindu* here on Monday that under this programme, the farmers will be provided with 10 kg of “Saamai” seeds; 20 packets of bio-fertilizers; 10 kg of millet micro-nutrient mixture; 75 kg of urea fertilizer; 50 kg of di-ammonium phosphate, all worth Rs. 2,800, per hectare. While the SBGF will provide a subsidy of Rs. 2,000, the farmers will have to contribute the rest Rs. 800.

Two groups will be formed in each of the Yercaud and Aythiapattinam blocks and the group members will be imparted training in using milling machines which will enable them in converting the “Saamai” into value added products, which will earn increased revenue to the farmers, the sources said.

Banana producer company to develop quality seedlings



Tamil Nadu Banana Producer Company Ltd. annual general body meeting in session in Tiruchi on Monday.— PHOTO: B. VELANKANNI RAJ

The Tamil Nadu Banana Producer Company Ltd., which was formed with the guidelines of Small Farmers Agri-Business Consortium, on Monday decided to embark on a project to develop quality banana seedlings so as to sell them to the needy farmers to improve productivity.

A resolution to that effect was taken at the company’s first general body held here. It was formed on July 25, 2014 with 50 grower societies and 860 share holders.

Sourcing of seed suckers of traditional varieties, quality inspection, and distribution from the Tuticorin and Tirunelveli cluster, distribution of Grand Naine planting material and drip and fertigation system for banana farmers of Theni, Cumbum, and Virudhunagar cluster, installation of pack house facilities and production of value-added products from banana from Tiruchi, Karur, and Namakkal cluster were among the part of prospective business plans discussed in the meeting.

G. Ajeethan, Managing Director, Tamil Nadu Banana Producer Company, said it had been decided grow quality seedlings as per standard norms to sell them to the members of grower societies and farmers.

Sourcing quality seeds was important to grow healthy seedlings.

The company would get quality seeds from various sources and agencies.

The members and Board of Directors were apprised of a Memorandum of Understanding with National Agro Foundation, Chennai, partnering for development and distribution of tissue culture seedlings to rejuvenate the traditional banana varieties grown in Tamil Nadu.

Sowing suffers owing to scanty rainfall



Green gram being grown in an agricultural field at Shahapur taluk of Yadgir district.— PHOTO: ARUN KULKARNI

Sowing during Khariff season in the district has been severely affected due to scanty rainfall across the district. According to the latest figures provided by the Agriculture Department in Yadgir on Monday, farmers have completed only 6 per cent (15,743 hectares) of sowing against the targeted area of 2.62 lakh hectares, which is bifurcated as 99,922 hectares in each of the three taluks for the season.

Of the 15,743 hectares, only 8,084 hectares was sown in Yadgir taluk, followed by 2,995 hectares in Shahapur taluk and 660 hectares in Surpur taluk respectively. Cereal was sown in 822 hectares, followed by pulses in 14,280 hectares, oil seeds in 271 hectares and commercial crops in 370 hectares.

Green gram, which has been considered as a short term cash crop, has been sown in 8,276 hectares against the target of 31,000 hectares. Red gram has been sown in 5,895 hectares as against the targeted area of 57,650 hectares. Chetana Patil, Joint Director of Agriculture department, told *The Hindu* over the phone on Monday that deficit rainfall caused less sowing in the district.

Against an average of 117 mm rainfall in June month, the district has received just 55 mm. She said that the farmers can shift to red gram or cotton and other pulses in the fields prepared for green gram, because the period of sowing green gram was almost over. Red gram and cotton will be sown up to July end, Dr. Patil said.

A day of sugarcane debate sans fury



Farmers stage a protest near the Suvarna Soudha in Belagavi.— Photo : Bhagya Prakash K

Protests do not stall the thinly-attended opening day of the legislature session

While the issue of long-pending dues to sugarcane farmers by sugar mills, and the spate of farmers' suicides led to protests outside the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, it did not stall the legislature session, as expected, in a thinly-attended opening day of the legislature session in the border district of Belagavi.

Contrary to expectations, the proceedings were low-key, with various leaders holding forth on the issue in both the Upper and Lower Houses for most of the day.

Members of the Bharatiya Janata Party staged a dharna in the Legislative Assembly as soon as the House met, demanding that transactions commence only after clearing the dues.

However, they returned to their places when Speaker Kagodu Thimmappa allowed a debate.

Anti-farmer policies

Leader of Opposition Jagadish Shettar said several farmers had committed suicide owing to anti-farmer policies pursued by the government. The Agriculture Price Commission had done nothing to fix prices for cane growers or other commodities, he said.

Later in the day, Minister for Higher Education and Tourism R.V. Deshpande said the government was ready to hold talks with the farmers, who have been agitating outside the Suvarna Vidhan Soudha. He said the government had sent a message to the leaders of the agitating farmers inviting them for talks.

When Mr. Shettar raised the issue of the government arresting the agitating farmers, Home Minister K.J. George said the police have only taken them into custody, but no cases will be filed against them. Mr. George also said the government would initiate steps to withdraw nearly 3,000 cases filed against the farmers who held protests during the last legislative session.

‘Auction sugar and pay’

In the Legislative Council too, the discussion was taken up before the Question Hour under Rule 68.

Opening the debate, Leader of Opposition K.S. Eshwarappa demanded that the government pay the dues out of its own coffers and then recover it by auctioning the sugar seized from defaulting mills to stop the “serial suicide” of farmers.

He argued that the government had already seized 7,80,000 tonnes of sugar from factories, which would fetch the government Rs. 1,575 crore at the rate of Rs. 20 a kg. “Pay the dues first, then recover it by auctioning the sugar at the earliest,” he said.

The debate in both the Houses kept getting derailed through the day, with the Congress and Opposition parties blaming each other for the current state of affairs.

Teaching the poor to behave



By shifting the burden of poverty alleviation from the state onto the poor themselves, behavioural economists are ignoring the structural causes of poverty. They are also erasing the behaviour of the owners of capital from the poverty debate

The World Bank’s World Development Report (WDR) 2014 was about ‘Risk and Opportunity’. The 2013 WDR is simply named ‘Jobs’. The 2012 WDR is titled ‘Gender Equality and Development’.

Other WDR themes in the recent past include ‘Agriculture for Development’ (2008), ‘Equity and Development’ (2006), and ‘Building Institutions for Markets’ (2002). They all have an overt economic dimension. Naturally — for it’s a bank, after all. But

the World Bank's 2015 WDR is titled 'Mind, Society and Behaviour'. That's right. Now, what would a bank — or, if you prefer, a multilateral development finance institution — want with mind, society and behaviour?

There is a two-word answer to this question: behavioural economics. In its 2015 WDR, the World Bank makes a strong pitch to governments for applying behavioural economics to development policy.

As the report notes in its opening chapter, "The analytical foundations of public policy have traditionally come from standard economic theory." Standard economic theory assumes that individuals are rational economic agents acting in their best self-interest.

But in the real world, people often behave irrationally, and not always in their own best economic interest. For instance, they might splurge when they could save, or give excessive weight to the immediate present as opposed to the distant future.

Is poverty a mindset?

Behavioural economics uses insights from psychology, anthropology, sociology and the cognitive sciences to come up with more realistic models of how people think and make decisions. Where these decisions tend to be flawed from an economic point of view, governments can intervene with policies aimed at 'nudging' the targeted citizens towards the right decision.

All this seems fairly unobjectionable. However, things change when behavioural economists focus their attention exclusively on the behaviour of the poor. Till date, there is no evidence that monitoring and 'nudging' the behaviour of the world's poor is a better route to alleviate poverty than, say, monitoring and 'nudging' the behaviour of the financial elite. Surely the latter cannot be deemed as altogether rational economic agents — not after the 2008 crisis?

The second assumption of behavioural economics — presented as a new 'finding' based on research, and regurgitated wholesale by the 2015 WDR — is that the poor are less intelligent than the rich. It is an obnoxious idea, and also politically incorrect. Of course, this is not stated in as many words.

The correct way to say it, then, is to state that "the context of poverty" depletes a person's "bandwidth" — the mental resources necessary to think properly — as a result of which he or she is, well, a poor decision-maker, especially compared to those who are not in "the context of poverty", such as the rich and the middle classes.

Lest anyone misunderstand, the authors of the report hasten to add that it's not just the poor but anyone — even the wealthy — who, when placed in a "context" of poverty, would make wrong decisions. (For the record, it must be noted that the poor are — all else being equal — more likely to be in "the context of poverty" than the rich.)

To support these assumptions, a number of research studies are trotted out. One such study, mentioned in the report, was conducted on Indian sugarcane farmers, who typically receive their income once a year, at the time of harvest.

It was found that the farmers' IQ was ten points lower before they received their harvest income than afterward (when they were flush with cash and were comparatively richer). So ideally, they should not take major financial decisions before harvest time. Such an insight into how poverty affects behaviour could have policy implications for, say, cash transfers — which can be timed, or made conditional, on displaying certain behaviours pre-determined by the state as 'rational'.

The report states in all earnestness that poverty “shapes mindsets”. From here, it is a hop, skip, and jump to holding, as the leading behavioural economists of the day do, that the poor are poor because their poverty prevents them from thinking and acting in ways that can take them out of poverty.

Thus the focus as well as the burden/responsibility of poverty-alleviation would shift from the state — from macroeconomic policy, from having to provide employment, health and education — to changing the behaviour of the poor. The structural causes of poverty — rising inequality and unemployment — as well as the behaviour of the owners of capital are evicted from the poverty debate, and no longer need be the focus of public policy.

Behavioural economics

In this context, it might be pertinent to note that the rise of behavioural economics as a discipline parallels the rise of neoliberalism, starting from the 1980s and rapidly gaining respectability and funding from the 1990s. All the leading lights of the field such as Daniel Kahneman, Amos Tversky, Robert Shiller, Senthil Mullainathan, Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein made their mark in this period, and are heavily referenced in this report.

A fundamental principle of neoliberal thought is to find market-led solutions to socio-economic problems. No matter that poverty is often a symptom of market failure. Free market ideologues attribute poverty and all socio-economic ills to market distortions caused by state interference. The economists who get to shape the World Bank's WDRs are chosen for their ability to toe this line.

“The report does not present any instance of a behavioural economics-inspired policy intervention whose target is, say, billionaire investors, despite the fact that they wield far more influence on a nation's economic destiny than the poor do”

On the odd occasion that the lead author of a WDR made a bid for intellectual independence, he had to make an untimely exit. For the 2000-01 WDR, titled ‘Attacking Poverty’, the original draft prepared by the distinguished development economist Ravi Kanbur — incidentally brought in by Joseph Stiglitz — spoke of the need to build effective safety nets for the poor before the introduction of free market reforms.

Both Mr. Kanbur and Mr. Stiglitz were out of the World Bank before the report was. As the economist Robert Wade points out in an essay on this episode, titled ‘Showdown at the World Bank’, the version eventually published no longer spoke of creating prior safety nets for the poor. It instead called for putting them in place “simultaneously with labour-shedding reforms”.

The point of this detour into WDR history is that — to borrow the jargon of behavioural economics — the overarching necessity to conform to free market ideology may be said to impose a ‘cognitive tax’ on World Bank economists, as a result of which their ‘mental models’ do not permit the ‘framing’ of poverty in ways that may contradict this ideology.

The Keynesian formula of safety nets from the free market may well be permanently banished from the policy agenda. But that still leaves unresolved the problem of how to manage the social and political consequences of the widening income gap between the 1 per cent and the 99 per cent. This is critical because growing discontent could lead to political instability. After all, in order for markets to function, and commodities to flow freely and predictably, the excluded masses must be taught to behave. This is where behavioural economics comes in.

Action and behaviour

In order to change the behaviour of the poor, one must first understand it. It is this understanding that behavioural economics promises to codify into knowledge. To be sure, the WDR readily acknowledges that even the rich, the economists, and the World Bank staff themselves, might be subject to cognitive biases.

But nowhere in its 230-odd pages does the report present an instance, or even a hypothetical example, of a behavioural economics-inspired policy intervention whose target is, say, a class of billionaire investors, despite the fact that today, compared to the poor, this is a group that wields far more influence, per capita, on a nation’s economic destiny. Changing their behaviour — for instance, manipulating them into deploying their billions on productive rather than speculative investments — could generate more beneficial, and more effective, outcomes than micro-manipulating the financial decisions of a poor peasant.

A major confusion that dogs this report is the conflation of ‘action’ and ‘behaviour’. The term ‘behaviour’ comes with the baggage of the empirical sciences. It is typically used with reference to animals and objects under scientific observation. Behaviours

can be studied for patterns. To the extent that human beings are also animals, they can also be said to exhibit behaviours. But what makes them human is precisely their capacity to transcend behaviour patterns — in other words, to act.

The political theorist Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, speaks of three kinds of human activity: labour, work and action. Of the three, what distinguishes action is its political nature. When behaviourist economics speaks of poverty as a “cognitive tax”, it writes ‘action’ — the political agency of the poor — out of the equation.

As democratic nation states reorient themselves to being accountable to global financial markets, non-democratic bodies such as the World Trade Organization, and trade agreements such as General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and Trade in Services Agreement, they will necessarily become less responsive to the aspirations of their own citizens.

With overt repression not always the most felicitous or cost-effective policy option, it has become imperative to find ways and means to ideologically tame the economically excluded. Hence the new focus on the minds and behaviour of the poor.

Behavioural economics, insofar as it is concerned with the behaviour of people in poverty — and it is this stream which dominates this year’s WDR — is simply the latest addition to the neo-liberal toolkit of political management.

Farmers asked not to sow Basmati 1509 till July 15

The Punjab and Haryana governments have advised paddy farmers not to undertake sowing of a high-yielding variety ‘PUSA Basmati 1509’ before July 15 after exporters complained of breakage due to early plantation.



An awareness campaign has been launched in both Punjab and Haryana -- the two major basmati rice producing States. The farmers have been asked to “shun” the practice of sowing 1509 variety before July 15.

“We are asking farmers under the campaign to transplant Basmati 1509 variety after July 15 otherwise there will be high incidence of broken content and moisture content in the crop will be higher,” Haryana Additional Chief Secretary (Agriculture), Dhanpat Singh said here on Monday.

If the crop is planted pre-maturely, then there will be high breakage while milling and will have no acceptability in export market, according to basmati rice exporters. “What farmers do is they plant this crop before July and as a result of which the grain remains immature and weak. When we mill or process it, the grain breaks up,” Punjab Rice Millers and Exporters Association director Ashok Sethi said. – PTI

State unveils credit plan with an outlay of Rs. 1.25 lakh cr.

Agricultural sector takes lion's share with Rs. 65,272 crore

HIGHLIGHTS OF SLBC REPORT		
○ Total deposits outstanding at the end of March: Rs. 1,93,753 cr.	○ Total outstanding advances: Rs. 2,15,797 cr.	
○ Priority sector advances: Rs. 1,51,482 cr.	○ Agricultural advances outstanding: Rs. 95,957 cr.	○ Total credit outstanding under MSME sector: Rs. 32,276 cr.
○ Education loans: Rs. 3,062 cr.		○ Housing loans: Rs. 17,424 cr. 

The State government has unveiled a massive credit plan for 2015-16 with an outlay of Rs. 1.25 lakh crore.

Agricultural credit took the lion's share of the credit plan with Rs. 65,272 crore followed by MSME sector at Rs. 16,960 crore and other priority sectors including education and housing at Rs. 14,688 crore. Of the total outlay, the priority sector was earmarked Rs. 96,920 crore and non-priority sector Rs. 28,828 crore.

Launching the credit plan, Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu exhorted bankers to gear up for rolling out of the third phase of the debt redemption scheme. The State had linked a majority of the accounts with Aadhaar and the process should be completed at the earliest.

“Farmers should be relieved from debt burden and farming should be made profitable,” he said.

He lamented that failure in proper communication to farmers led to some confusion and the bankers should take the initiative to clear it. “All the farm loans should have been renewed by now,” he said asking the bankers to identify growth driving sectors based on demand for disbursement of credit accordingly.

The Chief Minister wanted banks to adopt interoperability that would allow business correspondents of one bank to offer payment services to other lenders for efficiency and optimisation. Interoperability would enable the government to disburse pensions efficiently and would go a long way in ensuring cashless economy achieving the targets set in the financial inclusion plan. Mr. Naidu favoured formation of sub-committees for agriculture, horticulture, livestock, fisheries, MSME and affordable housing as it would give a thrust to economic activity in the State. Asserting that the government had prioritised agriculture and allied activities, he wanted the banks to disburse loans in timely manner to these sectors to ensure accelerated development.

Chief Secretary I.Y.R. Krishna Rao, RBI regional director R.N. Dash, Nabard Chief General Manager Harish Java, members of the State-Level Bankers Committee and senior officials were present.

Farmers welcome govt. order on neera tapping

In a move that has been widely welcomed by coconut farmers, the State government has taken a decision to issue licences to all applicants for tapping neera, the sweet, unfermented sap from coconut flowers.

The order from the Department of Agriculture on June 22 said that any farmer applying for licence for neera tapping would be issued licences by the Excise Department. The order implies that all the 362 applicants, who have registered with Coconut Development Board for licences would be issued licences shortly. Only 173 applicants, who are registered with the Board, have been issued licences.

Chairman of Consortium of Coconut Producer Companies Shahjahan Kanjiravilayil welcomed the GO and said that it would augment neera business in the State. He thanked the Chief Minister Oommen Chandy for taking the initiative in expediting the issue of licences to farmers for neera tapping.

Cardamom cultivation takes a beating

Felling of trees, unscientific cultivation of some varieties take their toll during rain and wind



Cardamom plants that have been destroyed in heavy rain and strong winds in a plantation at Madhavankanam, near Anavilasam, on the Cardamom Hill Reserve in Idukki.

Large-scale felling of trees in the Cardamom Hill Reserve (CHR) and unscientific cultivation of 'land raise' varieties have resulted in heavy destruction of cardamom plants in the recent rain and wind.

A senior scientist of the Indian Cardamom Research Institute (ICRI) told *The Hindu* on Monday that there were nearly 20 land raise varieties of cardamom plants preferred by farmers for their high yield.

They did not require the 50 per cent shade needed for congenial growth of the natural forest varieties. The farmers also cultivated such varieties in the open as they were believed to grow robustly in direct sunlight. There was large-scale destruction of trees

in the CHR, and this had led to loss of cover soil. Also, when heavy winds lashed, the plants become the first calamity.

For cardamom cultivation to sustain, climate and environment had to be balanced, he said, adding that except for a few, the land raise varieties known for their high yield had not been cleared by the scientific community.

As the farmers could not be given direction on the selection of variety, the land raise varieties were widespread in the CHR. When the trees were cut, direct sunlight started to fall on the soil, resulting in the growth of pests.

To control them, the farmers had to apply large quantities of pesticide, affecting the soil condition and the atmospheric temperature.

The wind too had a direct effect on the plants owing to loss of tree cover.

The uprooting of trees, leading to loss of human lives, was the result of the loose soil on the slopes, he said, adding that the farmers were following unscientific soil protection and farming.

A resource person of the Spices Board of India said that when the trees in the CHR were pruned, the green cover lost resulted in change in atmospheric temperature, which could negatively impact the sustainability of cardamom cultivation.

If the pruning of branches and destruction of trees continued, the sustainability of cardamom cultivation would be in question as the land raise varieties were highly sensitive to atmospheric conditions and pest attack, he warned.

A tiny tweet from nature

These pretty and tiny birds feed on hibiscus flowers and also help in cross-pollination

A flash of purple, a whirr of wings, a curved beak, which is slipped deep into a red hibiscus flower...makes such a pretty sight in your garden. That's the purple-rumped sunbird, also known as *Leptocoma zeylonica*.

The sunbird is said to be a common resident breeder in southern India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Like other sunbirds, these birds are small in size, feeding mainly on nectar and insects when feeding their young.

According to the net, these hummingbird-sized birds are commonly observed feeding on bright-coloured flowers, dew-bathing, or bathing by sliding in drops of rain collected on large leaves. When breeding, the female is often seen collecting cobwebs, while the male flies besides her. The nest is constructed by the female alone out of fine plant fibres, cobwebs and is studded on the exterior with bark and seeds. Joseph Hoover says: "I admit that this dream image happened out of luck rather than talent. I was sitting on my couch early one morning and heard intermittent chirps from the

garden. As I peeked out I saw the bird perched on a hibiscus plant and took three frames through the window grill! I was looking through the view-finder and the bird took flight. It turned out to be the best picture I have taken so far as an amateur photographer. I was waiting to capture this bird for a long time.”

These birds measure less than four inches in length. Their thin, down-curved bill and brush-tipped tubular tongue are well-adapted to sip nectar from flowers. Like hummingbirds, they too can hover in front of flowers when feeding for short bursts of time. According to a birding site, they also pierce flowers that are too deep to probe at the base, to reach the nectar.

Avid birder Chandrakantha Ursu says: “I often see them on hibiscus flowers and when the ‘Flame of the Forest’ turns red, sunbirds make their best out of the opportunity. It is surprising to see how the female bird feeds all the nestlings equally, in spite of the demand from the first one at the entrance of the nest.”

An interesting point to note is that a number of flowers, benefit from cross-pollination by these sunbirds as their heads become covered with pollen, when they feed. As they move from flower to flower, the pollen is deposited, which is then able to produce seeds and fruit. Some native plants rely on them for pollination and would not be able to exist without the help of these birds. Purple-rumped sunbirds may breed throughout the year, however, most breeding activities happen during the monsoons and they typically produce two broods a year.

Rs. 701 cr. released towards compensation to farmers

Irrigation Minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao on Monday said the government had released Rs. 701.41 crore towards compensation to farmers, who had parted with their lands for the Polavaram Right Canal works.

“Efforts are being made to divert excess Godavari flood waters to Prakasam Barrage through the Pattiseema lift irrigation scheme by August 15. Once completed, water can be diverted from the Polavaram right canal to Prakasam Barrage via Pattiseema in 24 hours,” he added.

Farmers in Krishna district had agreed to part with 1,237 acres, while those in West Godavari had parted with 561 acres voluntarily under the land pooling scheme for the project.

Since 2006, works pertaining to the Polavaram Right Canal have been a contentious issue, and several farmers had approached the court. “The objective of the project is to provide water to meet the drinking and irrigation requirements of Krishna and Godavari deltas,” Mr. Rao said. On an average, the State received 90 per cent excess rainfall this year, and the government is trying to provide sufficient water to farmers in districts, which received normal rainfall, the Minister said.

Food position satisfactory

Mr. C. Subramaniam, Food Minister, allayed fears to-day [June 29] that the food position in the country was getting difficult. Addressing a press conference [New Delhi], he said there was a bumper food crop this year, though there was still not enough to cover the deficit. At the same time, the situation was much better than last year. The immediate provocation for the press conference were the remarks made recently by the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Mr. V.P. Naik, subjecting the food policy of the Central Government to severe criticism. Mr. Subramaniam referred to this but said he would not like to enter into a controversy particularly because Mr. Naik himself had closed it. All that he could say was that it would not be possible for the Government to convert a deficit State into a surplus State. The Centre could only ensure an equitable distribution of foodgrains available and thus minimise the difficulties of deficit States. That was what was being done now and the policy of the Government was aimed at fulfilling this objective. Having said this, Mr. Subramaniam however gave an assurance that this year's lean months would not be as difficult as those of last year.

FOOD

CENTRE CALLS STATE FOOD MIN MEET ON FOOD INFLATION ON JUL 7

To control spiralling prices of pulses and other essential food items, the Centre will hold a meeting of all state food ministers on July 7 to chalk out strategies to jointly tackle the crisis in the backdrop of possible deficient rains this year.

The day-long meeting is likely to be chaired by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley and presided over by ministers Ram Vilas Paswan and Radha Mohan Singh. PTI

What's your way of eating?

Being smart and mindful about the food you eat will help realise your long-term health goals

Nutrition is a tricky subject, mainly because there is no one way to do it right. There are many ways we eat, but most of us will fall under one of these five. Which one do you fall under and which one would you like to fall under?

1 Cultural eating

You eat what you eat. It's that simple. You ate foods that were specific to where you were born and/or brought up. You were born into a family that ate a certain way and so you ate that way too, and today, that's the only way of eating that feels normal to you. That's all you were taught, that's all you know and that's all was ever needed.

2 Mindless eating

Westernisation happened and you let it come into your house and onto your plate. These new foods came in boxes, could be cooked in very little time and little more than salt was needed to make it tasty. They could also be stored easily and for a long time. You initially ate these foods as a treat — the rare ice cream, black forest cake or milkshake. With time, these western foods wore Indian hats and you embraced these foods as your own. Now these foods are an integral part of your regular diet. Boxed cereals are now breakfast, a cool drink or a chocolate bar is mandatory at lunch and extra-sweet health drinks act as finishers for dinners. This way of eating is tasty and convenient but mindless and hence unhealthy.

3 Dieting

You probably overdid the first two types of nutrition, and now you're either overweight or your unflattering blood work made your doctor ask you to eat better. So you try to swing the pendulum the other way. You try to clean up everything. Nutrition, training, sleep, stress and everything in between. You deprive yourself of food, are always hungry and frustrated, and hence tend to give up. If you haven't already, you'll soon realise that this doesn't work. All the yo-yoing only leaves you frustrated and exhausted from the highs of gluttony and lows of dieting.

4 Cruising

By this point, you are a little stuck. Thanks to the unsuccessful dieting phase, you have knowledge that's making you feel guilty about eating mindlessly. So you use the knowledge you have and the information you can get from mainstream media to make healthy choices. You choose lassi over gulab jamun, order fruit juice instead of ice cream and do some form of exercise that doesn't involve dietary changes. You may soon realise that you are missing details, and in spite of making the right food choices and exercising regularly, you continue to gain weight as fat.

5 Smart eating

This is something that folks who've been through the previous four phases tend to do. This is when you realise that nutrition is not about culture or religious beliefs or fads or fat loss but about health, and it is a part of a much larger equation. You understand that nutrition is about finding the most optimal way to eat, given the unchangeable circumstances. If you live in a city like Chennai, you'd eat a predominantly vegetarian diet with some eggs, meat or cheese in it, you'd keep packaged goods away from being staples, you'd eat tropical and seasonal produce and you'd take advantage of the fact that we have sunlight available all days of the year. If you lived in Toronto or Thirunelveli, you'd modify accordingly. You'd also provide yourself enough buffer to enjoy the occasional treat, which may be cultural, religious and foreign in nature.


Realise that long-term health results from the “way of eating” you choose and not from the sporadic diets you do for a few months here and there. While there is no one way of eating that will work for everyone, irrespective of how you like to eat, being smart and mindful will go a long way.

Long-term health results from the “way of eating” you choose and not from the sporadic diets you do for a few months

‘MSP hike can boost pulses production’

Make their cultivation more attractive, says Abhijit Sen

A CROP OF LAST RESORT		
Low minimum support prices and poor yield have made pulses an unattractive crop for farmers		
Yield on average (per hectare)		
Cereals 2,400 kg	Oilseeds 1,100 kg	Pulses 760 kg
Minimum Support Price & returns		
JOWAR	URAD DAL	
Rs. 15.90 per kg	Rs. 44.25 per kg	
Rs. 38,160 per hectare	Rs. 33,630 per hectare	
Reasons behind the poor yield		
TECHNOLOGY-PROOF: No amount of R&D has raised yield significantly	INFERIOR LAND: Pulses are increasingly grown on less fertile land	



Former Member of the Planning Commission and economist Abhijit Sen said on Tuesday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi could give a push to increasing pulses production by raising the minimum support price (MSP) for procurement.

“Only by hiking the MSP of pulses significantly will their cultivation become more attractive over the growing of other crops,” Dr. Sen told *The Hindu* .

In his *Mann Ki Baat* address on Sunday, Mr. Modi had asked farmers to increase the production of pulses so that India no longer needed to import them.

An analysis by *The Hindu* of food grains production data to understand why farmers prefer to grow cereals rather than pulses found that pulses are among the least productive of all crops — the yields are on average 760 kg per hectare, compared to 2,400 kg per hectare for cereals, and 1,100 kg per hectare for oilseeds.

Low yields on the one hand and relatively more lucrative MSP for other food grains makes pulses an unattractive crop for farmers. For example, one hectare’s yield of jowar with a minimum support price of Rs. 15.90 per kg (as of June 17, 2015) gets the

farmer Rs. 38,160. The same land used to grow urad dal or tur dal with an MSP of Rs. 44.25 per kg earns the farmer Rs. 33,630 — that's Rs 4,500 less for every hectare the farmer devotes to pulses instead of cereals.

The reason behind this low yield in pulses — which has barely changed in more than three decades — is that pulses are technology-proof crops, argued Dr. Sen. “Despite years of trying, no amount of R&D has increased the yield of pulses significantly, unlike cereals which saw a huge increase in productivity due to technological advances.”

Another reason for the poor level of yields is that farmers are increasingly growing pulses on inferior land. “As farmers found that they were getting more out of growing cereals, pulses increasingly became marginal crops grown on marginal [less fertile] land. This has further hit yields,” Dr. Sen said.

Mr. Modi's exhortation to farmers to grow more pulses comes at a time when a fifth of the country's supply of pulses is imported, as the 2014-15 data shows. This proportion is much higher in the case of specific pulses. For example, 42 per cent of India's supply of peas was imported. This number was 32.4 per cent and 31 per cent for mosur dal and moong/urad dal, respectively.

Low yield levels and a significant dependence on imports have meant that the prices of pulses have risen sharply. The consumer price inflation in pulses, at 7.9 per cent in 2014-15, was higher than the overall food inflation of 6.2 per cent. In fact, proteins, fruits and vegetables have been the main drivers of food inflation since around year 2000, as opposed to cereals and sugar, which were the main drivers in the previous four decades.

“Create awareness of traditional food system”

Creating awareness of our traditional food system among schoolchildren and motivating them to use it will help them lead a healthy life. Students and their parents should also be encouraged to have traditional food instead of junk food, according to Collector N. Venkatachalam.

Inaugurating the World Consumers' Day celebrations here on Monday, he said that consumption of nutritious food was essential to keep youth mentally and physically well. Organically grown vegetables and fruits were good for health, he advised. Consumers should not be distracted by colourful advertisements.

They should check the quality of food and avoid purchasing packed food items without any required information on the pack. They should change the mindset that quality of high-priced products was good and quality of low-priced products was bad.

Later, he distributed certificates and mementoes to the best students and also coordinators of consumer forums.

Calcium essential for deep sleep: Study

If you are having sleepless nights, blame it on calcium deficiency as a key calcium channel has been identified as responsible for deep sleep, says new study.



If you are having sleepless nights, blame it on calcium deficiency as a key calcium channel has been identified as responsible for deep sleep, says new study.

The study also gives us a clue to understanding both normal and abnormal waking brain functions.

“It is the same brain, same neurons and similar requirements for oxygen and so on. So what is the difference between these two states?” asked Rodolfo Llinas, a professor of neuroscience at New York University School of Medicine and a Whitman Center Investigator at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole.

To tackle the broad question of sleep, Llinas and his colleagues focused on one crucial part of the puzzle in mice, Marine Biological Laboratory.

Calcium channels, selective gates in neuron walls, are integral in neuron firing, ensuring that all parts of the brain keep talking to one other. But during sleep, calcium channel activity is increased, keeping a slow rhythm that is different from patterns found during wakefulness.

Based on this clue, the scientists removed one type of calcium channel, Cav3.1, and looked at how the absence of that channel’s activity affected mouse brain function.

This calcium channel turns out to be a key player in normal sleep. The mice without working Cav3.1 calcium channels took longer to fall asleep than normal mice, and stayed asleep for much shorter periods.

Their brain activity was also abnormal, more like normal wakefulness than sleep. Most importantly, these mice never reached deep, slow-wave sleep.

“This means that we have discovered that Cav3.1 is the channel that ultimately supports deep sleep,” Llinas said.

Because these mice completely lack the ability to sleep deeply, they eventually express a syndrome similar to psychiatric disorders in humans. The findings appeared in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Recipe: Instant garlic bread with toppings



Ingredients:

Garlic Breads: 6 slices
Capsicum: 1 (chopped into cubes)
Onions: 1 (chopped into small cubes)
Boiled sweet corn: 1/2 cup
Tomato: 1 (chopped into small cubes)
Oregano: as per taste
Red chilli flakes: as per taste
Salt: as per taste
Butter for greasing
Cheese cubes or slices
Pizza Topping spread

Method:

Take a slice of garlic bread and apply Pizza topping spread over it Place all the vegetables over it. Sprinkle oregano, red chilli flakes and salt Layer with with cheese finally Grease a baking dish with butter and place the bread in the microwave for 4-5 minutes, till the cheese melts Yummy snacks are ready to eat!

Handy culinary uses of lemon you must know



Lemons are a healthy flavour enhancer and the citrus fruit has a host of benefits too. Here's what to do with them...

- 1.** The most basic use of a tangy lemon is over salad dressings. It tastes great squeezed over rocket, lollo rosso or lettuce leaves with a dash of pepper.
- 2.** The tangy juice can also be used as a tenderiser for tough chicken, beef and lamb as well as in wet marinades. A lemon-herb marinade also works well as a 30-minute marinade for lighter fish like pomfret.
- 3.** Lemon can stop cut fruit from getting discoloured (going brown) owing to the vitamin C present in lemon juice. Simply squeeze a little on the fruit and keep it aside.
- 4.** It can make rice whiter and softer. Just add a few drops to the rice as it is cooking.
- 5.** For a pickled treat, make preserved lemons using lemons (with the rind) and salt. Add these to your bakes and tagines.
- 6.** Ceviche is a fish dish that cooks as it marinates in lemon juice. To make this, squeeze some onto a side of the white fish and keep it aside for 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and top it with herbs, olive oil, and chopped, fresh coriander.
- 7.** Lemons can also be used in desserts. They are added to tarts, pies and pastry and the zest of the fruit makes for an apt topping too.

Delicious no-bake party appetizers



Are you having trouble planning a last-minute party? Well, if you want to go for some very healthy, no bake appetizers, fret not! Here are a few options of no-bake appetizers that will be ready in a jiffy –

Cherry tomatoes with cheese and mint: Seed some cherry tomatoes and spoon in some cheese mixed with chopped mint into the tomatoes. You can drizzle some olive oil on top to add some extra flavor.

Bread bites: Drizzle some olive oil on small cuts of bread and then add your favorite toppings and take a bite. For toppings, you can choose from different vegetable slices to fruit pieces, meat cuts, varieties of dips or chutneys and top it all with some of your favorite cheese.

Herbed flatbread with spreads: You can go for herbed flatbreads like za'atar flatbread or something similar and team them with spreads like pesto, bell pepper sauce, cheese spreads etc.

Crudites with dips: Cut some veggies like cucumber, carrots, zucchini, bell peppers and Chinese cabbage into thin slices and serve them with a plate of different dips, salsa and cheese.

Three yumilicious devilled eggs recipes

Devilled eggs or eggs mimosa is an afternoon tea party staple. It's simple to make but looks elegant on a laid-out table.

These are hard-boiled eggs, shelled, cut in half, and filled with the egg's yolk that's mixed with ingredients of your choice. Egg is a versatile food item and this recipe can be as imaginative as you want it to be.

Here are the recipes of three variants of the delicious and health devilled eggs:

Cooking time: 15 minutes

You need: 6 eggs for the following recipes

1. Classic Devilled Eggs



No time for a fancy devilled egg? No problem. There's always the good ol' classic devilled eggs to fall back upon. This is an all-star dish that's quick to make and quicker to vanish!

Ingredients

1/4 cup mayonnaise; 1 teaspoon white vinegar; 1 teaspoon yellow mustard; 1/4 teaspoon salt; Freshly ground black pepper; Paprika powder for garnish

2. Spinach, Cheddar Cheese, and Bacon Devilled Eggs

Who doesn't like the delicious combination of bacon and eggs. The spinach makes for a eye-catching colour when mixed with the yellow of the yolk. This dish doesn't just taste divine, it looks great as well!

Ingredients

3 tablespoons of minced spinach;
3 strips of crispy fried bacon, chopped into tiny bits;
2 tablespoon grated cheddar cheese;
1/4 teaspoon salt (reduce amount if bacon is salty);
Freshly ground pepper powder

3. Garam Masala and Raw Mango Chutney Devilled Eggs

Give an Indian twist to the recipe with a dash of garam masala and raw mango chutney. It's zesty and full of flavours -- a sure shot winner!

Ingredients

3 tablespoons minced green onion 1 1/2 teaspoons raw mango chutney (you can use fresh or bottled) 1/2 teaspoon garam masala Finely chopped parsley (dhaniya)
salt to taste

DIRECTIONS

1. Perfectly boiled eggs for this recipe is crucial. So time it well. Place the eggs in a saucepan and cover them with 1 inch on cold water. Put the pan on gas with medium-to-high heat. As soon as the water reaches a brisk simmer, start timing. A hard-cooked egg should be cooked for 5 minutes. Once you clock the appropriate time, remove the saucepan from heat, empty out the boiling water, and put the eggs directly under a running tap with cold water. This way, the eggs stop cooking instantaneously and the yolks remain that delightful yellow colour.
2. Once cool, de-shell eggs and cut them half length-wise. Separate the yolk from the whites. Keep the whites aside.
3. Next, put all the egg yolks together in a mixing bowl and mash them up using a fork.
4. Now, add the ingredients of your choice (mayo-mustard; spinach and cheese; green onions, raw mango chutney and garam masala) and mix them well. Check for salt and adjust accordingly.
5. Using a spoon or a pipe, fill the egg whites with the mashed and ingredients-infused egg yolks.
6. Garnish with paprika and pepper powder, finely chopped bacon and parsley.
7. Serve immediately

DECCAN Chronicle

Nizamabad : Onion prices bring tears



NIZAMABAD: Scarcity of both red and white onions has pushed up its price in the last few days in Telangana state, especially in Nizamabad district. In retail market, onions are being sold at ₹40 per kg. Usually, the price ranges from Rs 10 to Rs 20 per kg.

Onion is mainly sown in Dichpally, Nizamabad, Jakranpally and Dhar-pally mandals in the district. In addition, onion is brought here from Maharashtra and other parts of the country. Interestingly, people of Nizamabad prefer to consume white onions over the red ones. Hotels, restaurants and other eateries also use only white onions for salad.

Wholesale traders bought large quantity of onions from Nasik in Maharashtra. Local produce is sufficient to meet demand of onions in January through April. Rest of the year, retail traders procure onions from other parts of the country.

Speaking to this newspaper, Lakshmi, an housewife, said that they have curtailed usage of onions in their day to day cooking recently. “We have purchased only little quantity of onions for specific dishes,” she said. She recalled that during NDA regime in early 2000s onion prices had skyrocketed. Both the state and central governments should regulate prices of vegetables, particularly onions, she opined.

On the other hand, few traders have been hoarding onions in huge amounts to create artificial scarcity. Taking advantage of the gap between demand and supply of onions, few traders are trying to hoard stocks. People are urging civil supplies and marketing department officials to conduct raids on godowns and release the onions to stabilise prices.

New records at Coonoor tea sale

Coonoor, June 29:

New records were created on price and volume fronts at Sale No: 26 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions when 88 per cent of the 18.83 lakh kg on offer was sold.

“ We sold as much as 1,045 lots in a single session – the highest in 2015. This is for the second consecutive week and for the third time in the history of south Indian tea auctions that the sale volume exceeds 1,000 lots,” Ravichandran Broos, General Manager, Paramount Tea Marketing, told *BusinessLine*.

Broken Orange Pekoe Small grade of Hittakkal Speciality, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped CTC market when Jay Kay Enterprises bought it for Rs. 244 a kg.

Chamraj topped the orthodox market from corporate sector fetching Rs. 250.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs. 40-44 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs. 100-145 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged Rs. 50-55 for plain dusts and Rs. 110-175 for brighter liquoring dusts.

There was some purchase for Pakistan in Rs. 45-81 a kg.

Cardamom gains flavour on copious rains

Kochi, June 29:

Small cardamom prices gained at last week’s auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Incessant rains in the main cardamom growing district in the country, Idukki, accompanied by strong winds has inflicted damages to the cardamom plants in several areas. This phenomenon has created a bullish sentiment in the market and that in turn has pushed the prices last week by around Rs. 30-40 a kg.

An estimated 15-20 per cent of the plants has been damaged and that in turn would result in a corresponding decline in the output, some of the growers in Idukki district told *BusinessLine*.

Harvesting and other activities in the estates were stopped from Monday to Wednesday last week because of the strong winds along with the rains, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*. Given this scenario, upcountry buyers were all covering, albeit small volumes. Whatever material arrived was absorbed by the market, he said.

He said in the current arrivals 30-40 per cent of the capsules are from the new crop. But, size of the cardamom is of medium type. Supply of exportable grade material is

yet to pick up. An estimated 25 tonnes of cardamom were bought by the exporters, trade sources said.

Last week, arrivals stood at around 348 tonnes against 375 tonnes the previous week and 256 tonnes at this time of the season last year.

At the Cardamom Planters' Association (CPA) auction held in Bodinayakannur today, 18.2 tonnes arrived and 17.2 tonnes were traded. The maximum price was at Rs. 843 a kg and the auction average increased to Rs. 684.46 (626.84). The individual auction average too moved up and vacillating between Rs.660 and Rs. 700 a kg.

Total arrivals during the season up to June 27 stood at 21,077 tonnes against 21,245 tonnes during the same period last year. The sales were at 20,497 tonnes and 20,521 tonnes respectively.

The auction average as on June 27 was at around Rs. 675 against Rs. 765.

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): 8 mm bold good colour 990-1,000; 7-8 mm 810-825; 6-7 mm 670- 695; below 6 mm: 600-610.

Cottonseed firms woo farmers in a big way

To beat competition, firms buy TV prime slots, rope in Tollywood talent



Tollywood comedian Krishna Bhagawan promotes a cottonseed brand. Seed firms have roped in film actors for ads and TV time slots to take on peers as the kharif sowing picks up M Murali

Hyderabad, June 29:

With the early onset of monsoon and promise of good rains, cottonseed firms are vying with one another in grabbing the attention of farmers, distributors and the village-level retailers.

They are flooding television channels in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana with advertisements as farmers make long queues for seeds in major towns.

“We have been witnessing this trend for the last three years. It was not there earlier. The cost of airing these ads is much more than making them,” M Prabhakara Rao, Chairman of Nuziveedu Seeds, told *BusinessLine* .

The firms have roped in character actors such as Prakash Raj and Krishna Bhagawan to promote their seed brands. Some top firms are promoting more than one brand.

Sales numbers dip

“It is not just top firms. Even small firms with small volumes of sales have also joined the race. Though the industry is facing a financial burden due to significant increase in cost of production, the firms are spending like anything,” K Niranjan Kumar, a leader of Seedsmen Association and Chief Executive Officer of Garc Seeds Private Limited said.

Telangana grows cotton in 17 lakh hectares and Andhra Pradesh in 5 lakh hectares.

Though it initially thought there would be stagnation in sales volumes, the industry is in the process of revising the number upwards.

The industry, sold about 4.75 crore packets (450 gm each) last year, has an inventory of 6.5-7 crore packets. The industry hopes to clear part of the piled up stocks.

“The big firms have deep pockets and the ad budget would be a small portion of their turnovers. But it is not the same case with smaller firms. They are being forced to spend to get the same visibility that their bigger competitors are getting. Also, they must keep the distributors in good humour,” a seed firm executive said.

Cost structure

No firm would like to reveal the actual size of their budgets. That a 10-second slot in a TV channel costs about Rs. 4,000-6,000 gives an indication on the likely spends. There are at least 10 major channels in the two Telugu States with considerable reach. This is in addition to the conventional advertisement channels such as hoardings and wall impressions. “Remember that they have to buy more than one slot to make an impact and get a recall value. It just reminds us the ad blitz generally carried out by educational institutions in the summer,” the executive said.

Planting gathers speed

Meanwhile, cotton planting has gained pace on better than expected rainfall in June this year. As of Thursday last, cotton was planted on a total of 34.9 lakh hectares, up 20 per cent from corresponding last year's 29.1 lakh hectares. The higher area was mainly due to increased acreages in states such as Maharashtra, Telangana and Karnataka.

Tea prices up at Kochi sale on export buying

Kochi, June 29:

Improved export enquiries were noticed for several varieties of tea especially for dusts at Kochi auction last week. Medium and plainer varieties were firm to dearer following such enquiries in sale no 26.

Good liquoring and high priced teas opened on a steady note. As the sale progressed, it declined by Rs. 3-4 a kg and sometimes more following quality. The quantity on offer in CTC dust was 13,17,500 kg, showing a decline compared to last week.

However, in orthodox grades, there was a fair demand and the quantity on offer was 10,000 kg. A small quantity sold was absorbed by exporters, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.

In Cochin CTC dust, good varieties quoted Rs. 90-130, mediums fetched Rs. 65-92 and plain grades stood at Rs. 59-70.

However, the arrival was low in orthodox leaf grades at 70,500 kg. In the CTC leaf sales, Good Liquoring, Fannings, medium and plainer varieties were dearer with the active support of upcountry buyers and exporters. The quantity on offer was only 40,500 kg, low as compared to last week.

Monsoon in a lull; Pacific typhoon may revive it from weekend

Thiruvananthapuram, June 29:

The monsoon has entered a subdued phase and is likely to lie low for the first 15 days in July except along the foothills of Himalayas and parts of east India.

The India Met Department said that the monsoon was vigorous (marked by heavy rain) over east Uttar Pradesh, east Madhya Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh during the 24 hours ending on Monday morning.

The Met has already predicted that July is likely to deliver below normal rainfall (at 92 per cent of long-period average) this year.

Weather systems

The two main rain-driving systems are a low-pressure area (erstwhile deep depression from the Arabian Sea) over east Uttar Pradesh and a truncated offshore trough from Maharashtra to Kerala.

The 'low' will continue to loiter in the region for a couple of days and then weaken and merge with the land-based monsoon trough extending from north-west to south-east (northwest India to Bay of Bengal). But indications are that a fresh low-pressure area may form over the head end of the Bay of Bengal (northernmost part of the Bay) by the weekend.

This would happen as the monsoon flows get energised from ‘pull’ exerted by a projected typhoon in the west Pacific, southeast of Philippines and heading towards east China according to initial assessments.

The revived flows are expected to touch off activity in the Arabian Sea, peninsular India and the Bay of Bengal from Friday/Saturday.

US models predict that the initial west-northwest movement of the typhoon would trigger the formation of a ‘low’ in South China Sea that lies next to the east.

Fresh bay ‘low’

The Pacific and South China Sea teaming up in this manner has sent its own ‘pulse’ into the Bay of Bengal which is the next big sea body that is located further east in a straight line.

No wonder models point to the ‘sweet spot’ in the head Bay where they expect a fresh ‘low’ to materialise. It would most possibly take the path along foothills and keep the monsoon in full flow in that region only.

This promises another round of heavy to very rainfall and suspected landslides in north-east and east India from the weekend.

Meanwhile, the offshore trough has been delivering good rainfall over Kerala and adjoining region in the south peninsula over the past couple of days.

It is now a feeble formation and will cause rainfall over isolated places over Kerala and coastal Karnataka during the next couple of days.

Business Standard

Agri prices up as rain and sowing spread

Total area sown till last Friday was 16.56 mn hectares, up 23% from same time last year

Prices of agricultural commodities have declined by up to 12 per cent so far this month, on prospects of a good output this kharif season, after better than expected [monsoon](#) rain and more sowing.

[Soybean](#) prices are down 10 per cent to Rs 3,591 a quintal at the Indore mandi. [Chana](#) is down 12 per cent to Rs 4,205 a qtl in Delhi. Jeera prices in Unjha (Gujarat) have slipped 11 per cent to Rs 16,475 a qtl. Other commodities have behaved similarly. According to Union [agriculture](#) ministry data, the total area sown till last Friday was 16.56 million hectares, up 23 per cent from the same time last year. This had picked up after the spread of rain. Pulses' sowing moved up by 80 per cent and that of cereals and oilseeds by 15 per cent and 427 per cent, respectively.

After the deficient monsoon rain forecast by India Meteorological Department, first at 93 per cent of the long period average (LPA) in April, prices had begun moving up. More so after a downward revision in the forecast to 88 per cent of the LPA.

High prices pull down dehydrated onion exports by 70%

Govt's move to increase minimum export price to contain price rise starts showing results

High prices of raw onions have resulted in a fall in shipments of the dehydrated variety from India by 70 per cent during 2015. Dehydration units generally commence production from January and continue till July.

About 14,000 tonnes of dehydrated onion have been exported between January and June, against 48,000 tonnes in the corresponding period last year. The sector expects to export 3,000 tonnes more by December from the inventory.

With the high prices mentioned earlier, demand from international buyers this year has been diverted to China and Egypt. Meanwhile, the Centre increased the minimum export price (MEP) of onion by \$175 a tonne to \$425 a tonne last week to ensure adequate domestic supply and contain price rise. As a result, prices at the Lasalgaon mandi near Nashik in Maharashtra fell 10 per cent to Rs 13.50 a kg.

“The biggest hurdle we faced this year was the high price of raw onion. It has raised production cost of dehydrated onion, which has made India's dehydrated onion costly in the international market,” said Vitthal Koradiya, president, All India Dehydration Association.

The government has expressed concerns and sought measures to curtail the price rise. The sector has been calling for increased use of dehydrated onions, which can reduce the cost for individual households. When processed, about 10 kg of fresh onions give roughly a kg of dehydrated onions, since the commodity contains around 90 per cent water.



Wholesale prices are between Rs 8 and Rs 14 a kg, unviable for the dehydration sector, which makes profit only when wholesale prices range between Rs 3 and Rs 7 a kg. Wholesale prices have started increasing in view of the marginal fall in domestic production, estimated at 18.92 million tonnes (mt) for the 2014-15 crop year (July-June), against 19.4 mt the previous year, according to government statistics.

Industry sources say unseasonal rainfall destroyed much of the current cycle of crop, mainly in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Major producing states are Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Gujarat and Bihar. A higher export duty puts additional cost in shipping dehydration onions. With a 10 per cent export duty, Indian dehydrated onion price stands at \$2,650-2,750 a tonne. China and Egypt offer at \$2,300-2,500 a tonne.

Asgar Chattariya, secretary, All India Dehydration Association, said: "Reduced exports have resulted in most of the units running part-time. After May, only a few units have been active."

Sixty-five of the 80 dehydration units in India are located in Mahuva area of Gujarat's Bhavnagar district. The production capacity of the country's dehydration sector is about 60,000 tonnes a year.

This year, output has been only 25,000 tonnes. Nearly 14,000 tonnes of this year's production has been exported, while the remaining stock is still with dehydration units.

Domestic consumption of dehydrated onion is negligible with just about 5,000 tonnes a year. Only metro cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kolkata consume dehydrated onion.