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# THE HINDU

## Special Agriculture Zones will be set up: CM

*It will add value to farm produce and make agriculture a profitable venture, says Siddaramaiah*



New in the market:Chief Minister Siddaramaiah arriving at the Agro-Tech expo in Mysuru on Friday; (right) dignitaries visiting the stalls after the inauguration of the three-day exhibition.— PHOTOS: M.A. SRIRAM

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said Special Agriculture Zones (SAZs) on the lines of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for industries will come up in the State this year to add value to farm produce and make agriculture a profitable venture.

The Karnataka State Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Committee, headed by the Chief Minister for redressing farmers' problems, will also come into effect this year, he added.

Inaugurating Agro-Tech, a three-day exhibition of new technologies, implements and innovations in farming, organised jointly by KASSIA and KSSIDC at Maharaja's College grounds here, Mr. Siddaramaiah said Karnataka is an "industry and investment-friendly" State. After agriculture, MSMEs are the highest job providers.

Explaining that migration to cities from villages had gone up with agriculture becoming non-profitable, he said value addition, processing of farm produce and robust marketing can make agriculture profitable and increase farmers' income.

Disclosing that the government had been promoting farm-based industries to make farming cost effective, he said the contribution to the country's GDP from agriculture had been on the decline. The contribution from the farm sector had declined further due to drought. Even the industry's share to the GDP had dropped and the contribution from the service sector had risen, he explained.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said his government was committed to the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and announced to hold a round table conference at Bengaluru in May, to address the problems faced by MSMEs.

"People had thought I am not industry-friendly. But, their opinion changed after we successfully organised Invest Karnataka in Bengaluru, which attracted top industrialists who described the summit as one of the largest," he told the gathering.

Claiming that Karnataka has been in the forefront to incorporate new technologies, he cited the example of e-market under Unified Marketing Platform (UMP), which is in operation in 103 APMCs across the State. He claimed that the Karnataka model of online trading had been replicated by the Narendra Modi government.

KASSIA president V.K. Dikshit presented the welcome address and Agro-Tech convener S. Sudhakar Shetty briefly explained what MSMEs needed from the government to sustain and grow.

On the occasion, KASSIA presented a memorandum to the Chief Minister.

Earlier, Mr. Siddaramaiah inaugurated the expo and visited the stalls. A total of 280 stalls have been put up.

During the valedictory on Sunday, 100 progressive farmers will be felicitated and financial assistance provided to the families of 50 farmers, who committed suicide. On the occasion, *Annadatara Mattastu Kathegalu*, written by journalist Amshi Prasanna Kumar will be released.

District in-charge Minister V. Srinivas Prasad, Ministers H.S. Mahadeva Prasad and Dinesh Gundu Rao, KSSIDC chairman Gurappa Naidu, MLAs Vasu, M.K. Somashekar, office-bearers of KASSIA and officials from KSSIDC were present.

***‘Contribution of agriculture to***

***the country’s***

***GDP has been on***

***the decline’***

**‘1,000 tonnes of fodder being purchased from West Godavari’**

Agriculture Minister Pocharam Srinivas Reddy said about 1,000 tonnes of fodder was being purchased from West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh.

Responding to a query by media at Chelmeda in Ramayampet mandal here on Friday, Mr. Srinivas Reddy said about 750 tonnes of fodder would be diverted to Mahabubnagar while 250 tonnes would be for Medak district where cattle were suffering owing to lack of fodder. He also informed that

farmers would be supplied fodder for Rs. 120 per quintal and the State government would offer subsidy on that.

In a related development, K. Lakshma Reddy, Joint Director, Animal Husbandry, said concentrated feed would be supplied for 500 milch animals in each mandal. Two kilograms of feed would be supplied to each animal for 50 days thereby providing 100 kilograms of feed in that duration at a cost of Rs. 6.50 per kilogram.

### **Sowing seeds of hope among tribal families**

*A six-year project has been rolled out for raising mango orchards*



FOR SAFETY:A view of the bund to check soil erosion at a mango field in Pachamalai.— Photo: B.Velankanni Raj

The mango sapling planted on their farms about a couple of years ago are just two to three feet in height. Obviously, none of the plants is tall enough to even reach the stage of flowering, leave alone any possible harvest of mangoes this season.

But tribal farmers of Pachamalai, on whose lands the saplings had been planted by Hand-in-Hand, a non-governmental organisation implementing the Integrated Tribal Development Programme (ITDP) funded by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD), are

confident of floating a farmers' producer company, as soon as the mango saplings would grow into trees and start yielding.

“We have been nursing the mango saplings with adequate care so that we can become prospective entrepreneurs,” says M. Raju of Nachilipatti village on Pachamalai hills.

He is one of the 1,390 tribal farmers who have been pinning hopes on the formation of the Farmer Producer Company, based on the ITDP. He proudly says he would become a promising entrepreneur in mango within a couple of years or so. With this aim, he has been nursing the mango saplings with good agricultural practices. As many as 1,390 orchards would be formed under the ITDP.

The NABARD had addressed various issues while identifying the beneficiaries' lands. Soil erosion was a major problem in the area. Bunds had been set up all along the fields so that the soil erosion could be prevented to a great extent, says S. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, Tiruchi. While field bunds were set up at places where the gradient and consequent soil erosion was nil, stone bunds were formed at critical areas with acute or severe soil erosion problem.

The Pachamalai is spread over two revenue districts — Tiruchi and Salem. While 765 orchards are being set up in the Tiruchi district, the balance 625 orchards are established in the Salem district.

The programme aims to enhance the livelihood of tribal families.

NABARD has proposed to set up 1,318 sumps — 710 in Tiruchi district limits and 608 in Salem area — under this project for supply of irrigation water to the fields and orchards. A concrete tank had been constructed in which the rain water is harvested and stocked.

The rainwater is being used for irrigation. "Sustainable livelihood is sought to be ensured through financial inclusion, women development, health and sanitation," he said.

With a view to ensuring irrigation facility even during summer, 'pitcher irrigation' technique has been put in place. Under this system, water from the ground level sump is let out for irrigation through porous holes at its base thereby ensuring uninterrupted water supply to the crops.

The six-year project is being implemented since 2014 and will conclude in 2020. Formation of orchards was one of the projects while the other programmes include rearing pig and honey bees and other vocations.

### **Fishing ban: migration of fisherfolk begins**



A fishermen family migrating in search of work.—File photo: T. Appala Naidu

Migration of fisherfolk has begun across the coastal belt of Krishna district, barely a week after annual fishing ban came into force.

An estimated 4,000 people, directly engaged in fishing in Bay of Bengal, were left with no employment opportunities in the district, according to reports from the Fisheries Department. While women in the coastal belt have been managing to earn a livelihood by engaging themselves in preparation and marketing of dry fish, the men are forced to leave the villages in search of work to survive till the ban is lifted on June 14.

Bandarkota village in Machilipatnam mandal and Nagayalanka, which witness huge fishing activity, wore a desert look as boats were anchored on the beach. “Many of our fellow fishermen have left for Vijayawada in search of work. The chilli market in Guntur will accommodate most of our fishermen, who work there as temporary porters (locally known as hamali),” Mr. Raghu Sekhar of Nagayalanka told *The Hindu* .

The fisherfolk also find work in agriculture the sector in Guntur district, where farmers are desperately in need of agriculture labourers for cultivation and harvesting of commercial crops.

“We have found that nearly 4,500 fishermen have lost their livelihood owing to fishing ban and are recommending a compensation of Rs. 4000 to each beneficiary,” Fisheries Department Assistant Director A. Solemn Raju told *The Hindu* .

The crew of the boat should obtain a certificate from the boat owner to get compensation. “We are identifying works to be taken up under the MGNREGA in Krishna district. The fisherfolk will be given work under the job scheme. Most of the works will relate to relate to the field of fisheries,” Mr. Raju added.

## Sugarcane turns bitter for farmers in Srikakulam district

*Rise in input costs, lack of remunerative price put them in a spot*



Turning unviable: Labourers cutting sugarcane at Gokavalasa village of Narasannapeta mandal in Srikakulam district on Friday.— Photo: Basheer

Sugarcane has begun to taste bitter for farmers in Srikakulam district owing to lack of remunerative price in the absence of cooperative sugar factories in the district.

The farmers sell their produce to a private sugar factory located in Sankili near Rajam. Some of the growers are selling the produce to middlemen, as they are not able to bear the cost of transportation to sugar factories located in Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts.

According to farmers, they get only Rs. 2,000 for a quintal of sugarcane. The output is up to 16 to 18 tonnes per acre, but they incur an expenditure of Rs. 35,000 on an acre with the increase in wages of labourers. A farmer hardly gets Rs. 25,000 per acre for his one year's hard work. They have to incur losses if weather plays spoilsport.

The condition of tenant farmers is pitiable, as they have to pay additional amount to the land owners. "We have been requesting the private sugar



factory and middlemen to increase the price for many months. Their assurance to hike the price is yet to be implemented.

More farmers would grow sugarcane if remunerative price is offered,” said a B. Appanna, a farmer of Gokavalasa in Narasannapeta mandal.

Sugarcane was grown on 80,000 acres when Amadalvalasa sugar factory was in operation. Now, the crop is grown only on 25,000 acres.

The factory, the only government-run agro-based factory, used to provide livelihood to many farmers .

### **Low prices hit drumstick farmers**

*Farmers say the price offered is no remunerative this year*



HOPES DASHED:Farmers sorting drum sticks at Aravakurichi in Karur district.— PHOTO: A. MURALITHARAN

Although the drumstick farmers of Aravakurichi in Karur district have netted good harvest this season, crash in prices has dampened their optimism.

According to an estimate, drumstick farms have been raised on about 5,000 acres of land in Aravakurichi and its neighbouring villages Manalmedu, Palayam, Eesanathan, Pungapadi, Vellodu, and so on. Drumstick has been a preferred crop among farmers of Aravakurichi region as the soil suits it best. Since the crop can sustain even during the severe drought condition, farmers have brought under it as many acres as possible in the region, which is considered as a rain shadow region.

At most places, the yield this season is said to have been good. Traders from different parts of the State and neighbouring States are buying the produce. But the offer of low price has disappointed farmers.

One kg of “Mara Murungai” (traditional variety) was bought for just Rs. 5. It was Rs. 8 for “Netta Murungai” (hybrid variety). The farmers say that the price is highly inadequate to meet the expenditure.

“I cannot expect more than what I am harvesting from my four acres of landholdings. However, the current market price is insufficient to get back the money spent on raising the crop,” says K. Balusamy of Aravakurichi.

He said farmers were in a position to clear the stock on day-to-day basis as they could not afford to keep them unsold due to the perishable nature of it.

The price would bring cheer to the farmers if they get Rs.12 a kg.

### **Feed intake in poultry will be less**

With temperature expected to be around 41 degree Celsius in the next four days, poultry farmers were asked to ensure feed management so that it does not affect the birds.

A weather advisory from Agromet Field Unit of Veterinary College and Research Institute and Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, said that the maximum and minimum temperatures will respectively be 41 degree Celsius and 28 degree Celsius.

Wind speed will rise to 10 km per hour mostly from southeast and humidity will be in the range of 30 per cent to 72 per cent. Prevailing temperature will reduce feed intake in poultry which results in decreased egg production and egg weight.

Though egg production is in accordance with feed intake, birds performance can be improved by maintaining feed intake at 100 gm to 105 gm a day.

Also, to improve feed intake, ensure that prevent drinking water lines are not warmed up and in-house temperature is not too hot.

Farmers were asked to adopt management measures such as regular high pressure removal of hot water from the pipelines and use of foggers, the release added.

### **Three-day event**

#### *AgriHorti Tech exhibition opened*

A three-day exhibition, AgriHorti Tech India 2016, showcasing products and services that find application in agriculture and horticulture, opened here on Friday. The list of participants include companies and representatives associated with agricultural machinery, fertilizer and chemicals, greenhouse solutions, irrigation and water technologies, marketing and export services besides renewable energy. The exhibition provides a platform for the farmers to learn about the latest technologies, a release from the organisers said. Besides Telangana government, a host of organisations, including ICRISAT, are supporting the exhibition.

## **In a first, cattle camp to come up in Medak**

*Food and water to be provided; over 1,000 cattle to take shelter*



A relief: The cattle camp to be set up at an open space at Sultanabad near Nallavagu, in Medak district.— PHOTO: Mohd Arif

It seems the Government of Telangana has learnt something from Maharashtra, which has been facing severe drought conditions. Water is being transported in trains and fodder camps are being held for cattle in Maharashtra.

For the first time in the State, a cattle camp would be coming up in Medak district, the native district of Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao. This is being planned near Nallavagu located in Narayankhed Constituency limits. A proposal informing that they need about Rs. 2.3 crore to run such a camp till the onset of monsoon was submitted to the State government. The administration is waiting for a response.

Presently, about 282 tmc ft water is available at Nallavagu, and from here, water is being pumped to Narayankhed area, meeting the demand of more than 50,000 people in the constituency headquarters and surrounding villages.

The cattle camp would be set up at an open place at Sultanabad near Nallavagu. Food and water would be provided to the cattle, and cattle grazers would also be provided shades to stay there so that they can take

care of the animals. It was expected that between 1,000 to 1,500 cattle would arrive there to take shelter, fodder and water.

Arrangements are on to procure fodder from the neighbouring Nizamabad district, in addition to Karnataka and .

“Our intention is to see that there should not be any distress sale of cattle by farmers due to lack of fodder and water. We will supply water through tankers and each cattle needs about 60 litres of water, while small animals like sheep and goat need 20 litres,” said Dr. K. Lakshma Reddy, joint director, Animal Husbandry.

### **Rs 2612.50 cr released for payment to Punjab farmers**

Easing the anxiety of the Punjab farmers, the State government on Friday released Rs 2612.50 crore for payment for procured wheat during the current Rabi marketing season.

All transactions have been electronically documented and payments disbursed.

From today onwards, the transactions would be done regularly and the pending payments would also be cleared within two days, an official release quoting Food and Civil Supplies Minister Adaish Pratap Singh Kairon, said. Reviewing the ongoing procurement operations in the State, the Minister said 66.55 lakh metric tonnes of wheat has so far been procured in the State.

The government agencies procured 65.62 lakh MT while the private traders procured 9.33 lakh MT till Thursday evening, as part of the procurement during the current season.

The Minister assured the farmers that with the receipt of the Cash Credit Limit from the RBI, farmers would be paid for their crop within 48 hours.

## **56 lakh tonnes of wheat arrive in Haryana mandis**

Wheat arrival in the mandis of Haryana has touched a new high of 55,93,184 tonnes.

Around 25,26,733 tonnes of wheat had arrived in the mandis during the corresponding period last year.

While giving this information here on Friday, a spokesperson for the Food and Supplies Department said that the procurement process was running smoothly in the mandis of the State.

He said out of the total arrival, 55,92,717 tonnes have been purchased by the government agencies at the Minimum Support Price.

Giving details of the wheat procured, he said that more than 19.85 lakh tonnes has been procured by HAFED, whereas Food and Supplies Department has purchased over 15.01 lakh tonnes. - PTI



## **Centre approves Rs 842 cr funds for Karnataka, Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh**

While Puducherry was hit by floods due to heavy rains in December 2015, Arunachal Pradesh too was affected by floods last year.



An amount to the tune of Rs 723.23 crore was approved to Karnataka, Rs 35.14 crore was approved for Puducherry and Rs 84.33 crore for Arunachal Pradesh. (Source: PTI)

The Centre on Friday approved assistance of Rs 842.7 crore for Karnataka, Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh, which have been affected by drought or floods.

The decision to provide assistance was taken by a high-level committee meeting chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh, an official spokesperson said.

The committee examined the proposals based on the report of the central team which visited Karnataka, affected by drought, and Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh, which have been hit by floods.

An amount to the tune of Rs 723.23 crore was approved to Karnataka, Rs 35.14 crore was approved for Puducherry and Rs 84.33 crore for Arunachal Pradesh.

The central assistance of Rs 84.33 crore to Arunachal Pradesh includes Rs 18 crore under National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP).

The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh, Union Home Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi and senior officers of the ministries of Home, Finance and Agriculture.

In total, 10 states, including Maharashtra and Karnataka, have declared drought in their parts. More than Rs 10,000 crore central assistance has been given to these states to tide over the situation.

While Puducherry was hit by floods due to heavy rains in December 2015, Arunachal Pradesh too was affected by floods last year.

### **Spiralling price of pulses: ‘Dal mein kuch kala hai’, claims Ashok Chavan**

Chavan, a former chief minister, also questioned the government’s “intention” behind first lifting stocking limits and then imposing them again, when the prices had similarly spiralled in 2015.



The Congress chief went on to claim that hoarders were being sheltered by the government. Express Archive

The Congress on Friday hit out at the BJP government for the spiralling prices of tur dal and other pulses. Firing a volley at the government, Maharashtra Congress chief Ashok Chavan said, “Dal mein kuch kala hai.”



He went on to claim that hoarders were being sheltered by the government. “The government is shielding them. This is what gives them the courage to inflate prices,” Chavan said.

Chavan, a former chief minister, also questioned the government’s “intention” behind first lifting stocking limits and then imposing them again, when the prices had similarly spiralled in 2015.

“The state government does not seem serious about controlling prices,” he said. In the recently concluded Assembly session of the state legislature, Prithviraj Chavan, another former CM, had raised allegations against Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and Food and Civil Supplies Minister Girish Bapat for the decisions taken in this regard in 2015.

Questioning the role of the ministers, Prithviraj Chavan had demanded a judicial probe into the matter, but the government had rubbished these allegations.

On Friday, the state Congress chief also announced that party leaders from the state would embark on a three-day tour to drought-hit areas from May 5 to take stock of the crisis and highlight challenges faced by farmers.

Nationalist Congress Party’s Supriya Sule and Maharashtra Navnirman Sena’s Raj Thackeray have made similar trips to drought-hit areas this week. Shiv Sena’s Uddhav Thackeray, too, had recently conducted a drought tour.

Meanwhile, on Kanhaiya Kumar’s visit to Mumbai on Saturday, Ashok Chavan said it was the responsibility of the state government and the police to ensure protection to him.

“There is a constant attempt to muzzle opinions against the government,” he said.

## Drought triggers distress sale of cattle in Andhra Pradesh, herders turn labourers



A farmer sits on a dried-up bed of a water body on the outskirts of Hyderabad, India. (AP Photo)

With water levels in most of the major reservoirs across Krishna and Godavari rivers reaching dead storage and ground water plummeting further, almost entire Telangana and parts of Andhra Pradesh are in the grip of water scarcity.

The heat wave has further added to people's miseries. Maximum day temperatures continue to be between 40 and 43 degree Celsius in Telangana and Rayalaseema region of Andhra. The heat wave has already claimed more than 100 lives in the two states.

The scarcity of fodder has dealt a blow to the crisis-ridden agriculture. Farmers in the worst-hit Mahabubnagar, Nizamabad and Nalgonda districts of Telangana and in perennially drought-prone Anantapur district of Rayalaseema are selling away their cattle to slaughterhouses.

With no fodder and water, small farmers are unable to maintain the cattle, the mainstay for the farming. The farmers, who have milch animals for additional income, are also selling them off at half the price.

For instance, cattle from various villages in Nalgonda district are brought to the weekly market at Kondamadugu near Bibinagar for sale.

“I couldn’t have seen it dying of hunger and thirst. So I sold it away,” said G. Narsaiah, a farmer from Nalgonda district who sold the only bullock he had.

The animals are dying because of heat wave. Shepherds were badly hit by the severe drought. The families dependent on cattle breeding are also forced to resort to distress sale.

There are also reports of farmers and agriculture labourers migrating to cities abandoning their pets.

Hundreds of people from Mahabubnagar, Nizamabad and other districts of Telangana and from various parts of Rayalaseema have migrated to cities like Hyderabad, Vijayawada, Bengaluru and Mumbai to work as construction labourers. While migration is an annual phenomenon, the numbers this year have gone up due to the severity of drought.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme (NREGP) has also taken a hit because of the scorching summer and also non-payment of wage dues to the labourers.

Telangana has declared holidays for schools a week in advance due to the heat wave. The government has announced that midday meal scheme for school children will continue even during holidays.

However, there are not many takers for this as the children have to cover a distance of two to three km to reach the schools. The intense heat is forcing them to remain indoors.

Targetting the Telangana Rashtra Samithi (TRS) government for failing to take tackle the situation, the opposition parties and NGOs are demanding relief measures on war footing. They want the government to arrange food for children, handicapped and aged near their homes.

Telangana government declared 231 mandals (revenue units comprising a varying number of villages) out of total 443 rural mandals in the state, drought-affected.

In Andhra Pradesh, 359 mandals out of 670 have been declared drought-hit. The water levels in 14 major reservoirs serving both the states have fallen alarmingly. The water available in all of these reservoirs was 224 TMC as on April 21. The availability was 233 TMC the same day last year.

The levels in most of these reservoirs have reached dead storage. Two of them have completely dried.

In Telangana, which is largely dependent on ground water, the level has plummeted further. According to latest report by ground water department, the average level for the state in March was 14.88 metres. The same in March last year was 12.27 metres.

### **Rs 842 cr relief approved for Karnataka, Puducherry, Arunachal**

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The decision to provide assistance was taken by a high-level committee meeting chaired by Home Minister Rajnath Singh, an official spokesperson said.

The committee examined the proposals based on the report of the central team which visited Karnataka, affected by drought, and Puducherry and Arunachal Pradesh, which have been hit by floods.

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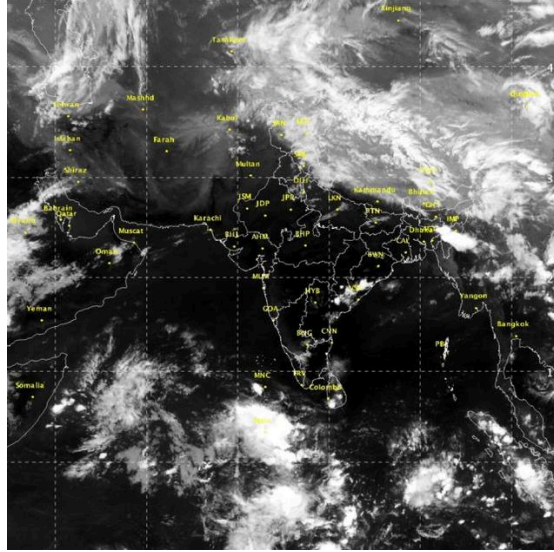
While Puducherry was hit by floods due to heavy rains in December 2015, Arunachal Pradesh too was affected by floods last year.

## THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

### **No respite for East India from heat wave: Met**

East India and adjoining parts of Central India have continued to reel from heat wave conditions and forecasts do not offer any respite during the next week and beyond.

Day and night temperatures are expected to stay above normal over parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha, an extended forecast from the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology said.



### **Above normal**

During this phase, above normal temperature regime may spread out further to parts of Telangana, Interior Karnataka and even Tamil Nadu.

During May 1 to 6, these conditions are forecast to concentrate once again to the East over parts of Bihar, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand and Odisha.

To the South, it would be South Andhra Pradesh and interior Karnataka which could find themselves at the receiving end, the extended forecast said.

Full-fledged heat wave may establish over Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha from April 22 to May 6.

Vidarbha, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and North Tamil Nadu could feel the heat from April 22 to 26.

### **Maximum temperature**

Odisha has been recording the maximum temperatures for days together now; during the 24 hours ending Friday, Titlagarh in that Met subdivision highest maximum of 47 deg Celsius.

According to an outlook of the US National Centre for Environmental Prediction, the elevated temperature conditions may migrate from the East to the North-West of the country from May 30.

Parts of Marathwada, Madhya Maharashtra, and North Interior Karnataka may heat up in tandem as the top heat extends from the North-West southwards to Central and adjoining Peninsular India.

Soil moisture is forecast to hold up over parts of West Madhya Pradesh and adjoining Madhya Maharashtra during April 22 to April 30, indicating possibility of some thundershowers in the region.

But these thundershowers may dry up from April 30. Fresh showers are expected to break out to the South over Rayalaseema, South Interior Karnataka and Kerala during April 30 to May 8.

### **Western disturbance**

Meanwhile, North-West India and West India continued to enjoy the recess from the seasonally top heat, thanks to the sobering presence of a western disturbance.

This river of lower pressure that circumnavigates the globe moderates the heat by conjuring up thunderstorms and increasingly dust storms in the expansive plains in the North-West.

The India Met Department has said that one such western disturbance is impacting North-West India from its perch over North Pakistan and neighbourhood.

It has spun off an offspring cyclonic circulation, which in turn is located over North-West Rajasthan and Punjab and is principally the trigger factor for the thunderstorms/dust storms.

In fact, the thunderstorms are likely to be accompanied by squall in the hills. These can set off heavy to very heavy rainfall in the North-East (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura).

### **In Kerala, organic farming is ‘politically’ correct**

Both the UDF and LDF now swear by organic farming, and have listed it prominently in their manifestoes.

Organic farming is growing big in the Kerala Assembly election campaign. Both the ruling UDF and opposition LDF now swear by organic farming, particularly of vegetables and fruits, and have listed it prominently in their manifestoes.

On the one hand, the UDF is promising heavy subsidies and an Organic Farming Board. On the other, the LDF promises a scheme to bring 50,000 hectares under organic farming while helping make Kerala kitchens free of pesticide-laden vegetables and fruits.

What’s spurring the political interest is the growing concern that the vegetables, fruits and food grains the State buys from its neighbours could be contaminated with high doses of pesticides. Kerala relies for its supplies of vegetables, fruits, rice, wheat, chicken and eggs on Tamil Nadu and other southern States.

“Most of the vegetables and fruits we get contain mind-blowing levels of banned pesticides,” TN Prathapan, the Congress MLA who is part of the ‘Green Brigade’ in the Assembly, told *BusinessLine*. “This is the major cause for the sharp rise in the incidence of cancer, infertility and lifestyle diseases in Kerala.”

The UDF wants to encourage each household to raise the daily vegetables it needs and to raise them organically, he added.



## **Vegetable revolution**

Over the past five years, Kerala — both urban and rural — has seen a ‘vegetable revolution’ of sorts. Urban middle-class families grow vegetables in tiny spaces so that they get at least a portion of their vegetable supplies uncontaminated.

“This is becoming a people’s movement,” TM Thomas Isaac, economist and former State Finance Minister and a member of the CPI(M)’s Central Committee, told *BusinessLine*. “People have woken up to the fact that what they eat is poison and now they want a solution to it; the political parties have realised this and the manifestoes reflect this.”

Isaac, who is defending his Assembly seat in Alappuzha, said the two manifestoes also signal the emergence of a political consensus over organic farming as well as self-sufficiency in vegetables and other food stuff. “The media has had a very positive role in this,” he noted.

Dr B Ekbal, neurosurgeon, health activist and former Kerala University Vice-Chancellor, said organic farming is now becoming a movement like the total literacy and library movements of the past which shaped Kerala’s socio-cultural identity. “It’s good for the State that the political parties are seeking votes using organic farming and poison-less fruits and vegetables,” he told *BusinessLine*. This should be extended to animal husbandry too, he added.

## **Centre sets up panel to prepare roadmap to double farm income**

The government has set up a panel to prepare a blueprint for doubling farmers’ income by 2022, as promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

“The committee will chalk out a plan to shift farm policies from being production-oriented to based on incomes,” a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

The eight-member panel will identify potential areas of agriculture where more investment should happen and suggest ways to reduce the risk of farming by diversifying to horticulture and allied activities like livestock and fisheries to boost income, the official added.

The government's decision to set up the committee follows the Budget announcement that set a target of doubling farm incomes by 2022.

The inter-ministerial panel, which is expected to submit the report in two months, will also look at reducing the cost of cultivation and addressing unpredictability of weather and price fluctuations in farm sector.

“The government is focusing not only on increasing crop yields but also on reducing the cost of cultivation to increase the net income of farmers. The schemes on soil health card, neem-coated urea and per drop more crop, are aimed at bringing down the cost of cultivation,” the official said.

Besides, the government is trying to address the unpredictability in agriculture due to market fluctuations, and due to weather by setting up an electronic National Agriculture Market and implementing a new crop insurance scheme, he added.

The committee will be headed by Ashok Dalwai, Additional Secretary at the Agriculture Ministry. The other members will be officials from Agriculture and Food Ministries as well as experts from the Delhi-based National Council of Applied Economic Research and National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research.

### **South India tea exporters' delegation visits Indonesia, Malaysia**

Five years after leading a tea delegation to Kenya, Dipak Shah, Chairman, South India Tea Exporters' Association (SITEA) has done it again, but this time to Indonesia and Malaysia.

Returning home after a four-day tour of these two countries, Shah admitted to *BusinessLine* that it was indeed a big challenge for the nine-member

visiting team, considering that both Indonesia and Malaysia are tea producing countries.

“The trip went off very well and now we are back after inking a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tea Trade Association of Malaysia (TTAM) to strengthen co-operation and establish an efficient co-operative mechanism through friendly negotiation,” he said.

Further stating that there were no statistics on the quantum of tea exports to Indonesia, Shah said Malaysia imported 12,000 to 14,000 tonnes of tea annually from India and volumes were growing steadily. “We are looking to double it in two years. They are looking for South Indian dust, but not “a very strong cuppa”, he said.

“And for the first time, SITEA and TTAM agreed to resolve disputes (that may arise post this MoU) through friendly negotiation,” Shah claimed.

While in Indonesia, the team met Rachmat Badruddin, Chairman, Indonesian Tea Board, and their members, including senior officials of the Indonesian Ministry of Agriculture.

Members of TTAM along with its President Liew Choon Kong received the visiting Indian tea delegation in Kuala Lumpur.

Recalling his visit to Kenya, Shah said “the challenges were similar, but the trade there, which had earlier indicated their willingness to participate in the discussions, abstained from the meeting. Subsequently, though, we managed to conclude the negotiations. Today, substantial volumes of tea are exported to Kenya.”

“But in Indonesia and Malaysia, not only did the members of the trade turn up in large numbers, the discussions were also fruitful,” the SITEA Chairman said.

## Turmeric gleams on quality



Spot turmeric prices increased at Erode markets due to quality arrivals. “Traders procured quality turmeric by quoting increased price for their orders. Still they are waiting for fresh upcountry demand.

The hybrid turmeric fetched good price,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. On Friday, 9,500 bags arrived and 80 per cent were sold.

The finger turmeric was up ₹100 a quintal and the root variety by ₹75.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, the finger turmeric went for ₹8,456-10,077 a quintal; the root variety ₹8,389-9,314. Of the 2,196 bags offered, 1,490 were sold.

# Business Standard

## Centre sets up panel to prepare roadmap to double farm income

The eight-member panel will identify potential areas of agriculture where more investment should happen



*The inter-ministerial panel, which is expected to submit the report in two months, will also look at reducing the cost of cultivation*

The government has set up a panel to prepare a blueprint for doubling farmers' income by 2022, as promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The committee will chalk out a plan to shift farm policies from being production-oriented to based on incomes," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

The eight-member panel will identify potential areas of agriculture where more investment should happen and suggest ways to reduce the risk of farming by diversifying to horticulture and allied activities like livestock and fisheries to boost income, the official added.

The government's decision to set up the committee follows the Budget announcement that set a target of doubling farm incomes by 2022.

The inter-ministerial panel, which is expected to submit the report in two months, will also look at reducing the cost of cultivation and addressing unpredictability of weather and price fluctuations in farm sector.

"The government is focusing not only on increasing crop yields but also on reducing the cost of cultivation to increase the net income of farmers. The schemes on soil health card, neem-coated urea and per drop more crop, are aimed at bringing down the cost of cultivation," the official said.

Additionally, the government is trying to address the unpredictability in agriculture due to market fluctuations, and due to weather by setting up an electronic National Agriculture Market and implementing a new crop insurance scheme, he added.

The committee will be headed by Ashok Dalwai, additional secretary at the Agriculture Ministry. The other members will be officials from Agriculture and Food Ministries as well as experts from the Delhi-based National Council of Applied Economic Research and National Institute of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research.



### **New insurance scheme for kharif crop in state**

state government on Friday announced to implement Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) in the state for kharif-2016. It would replace the National Agriculture Insurance Scheme.

Under the plan, launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 13, the premium rate for kharif crops will be 2% of the actual sum assured amount. The remaining share of premium (3% to 4%) would be borne

equally by both the state and the central governments as was the case in the previous scheme, official sources said.

For commercial and horticulture crops, farmers would have to pay a premium of 5% of the actual sum assured amount.

Initially, the state government aims to bring crops like paddy, cotton and groundnut under the purview of PMFBY.

Briefing the media after a meeting here, agriculture and farmers empowerment secretary Manoj Ahuja said the state government has selected three private insurance firms to implement the scheme in the state.

"We have divided the entire state into six clusters based on the agro-climatic situation and risk characteristics. Besides post-harvest loss, the insurance policy would cover other multiple localized risks at different times," Ahuja said.

The state government has made a provision of Rs 300 crore in 2016-17 agriculture budget to implement the scheme. Campaign to create awareness about the scheme in different districts would be carried out in the next two months, the sources said.

Around 20 lakh farmers were covered under the previous insurance scheme in 2015-16. "We would create massive awareness to cover more farmers under the new scheme this year. All farmers taking crop loans (around 17 to 18 lakh) would be automatically included," Ahuja added.

The agriculture secretary said the actual sum assured amount would vary from district to district as it is determined by a technical committee at the district level.

The scheme would benefit the farmers since the state is hit by disaster every year, the sources added. In last kharif season, 27 districts were affected by drought.

## **TNAU warns farmers of pests and crop diseases**

With the scorching summer drying up existing long-term crops, the lack of moisture has brought on pests and diseases in a number of crops like rice, groundnut, sugarcane and cotton.

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has advised farmers to immediately take remedial measures by spraying a mix of organic and mild chemical pesticides to ensure pests are controlled at the initial stages.

TNAU issued an advisory to farmers. The incidence of leaf folder and stem borer, a form of moth and insect larve, were noticed on rice plantations in Coimbatore, Erode, Dharmapuri, Karur, Thiruvallur, Pudukottai and Tirunelveli districts, said the advisory.

"Farmers are advised to set up light traps to monitor and kill adult months. If further required, farmers can spray neem seed kernel extract or cartap hydrochloride or chlorpyrifos for this problem," it said.

In all rice growing districts in the state, brown spot incidence was also noticed. "Hence, farmers are advised to spray Mancozeb two to three times at 10 - 15 day intervals based on the intensity of disease," said the advisory.

The leafminer incidence was also sporadically recorded in groundnut crops planted in Coimbatore, Erode, Tirunelveli, Ramanthapuram, Pudukottai and Dharmapuri districts. "Farmers are advised to monitor the insect using light traps. If needed, farmers can spray some neem seed kernel extract," said the advisory.

The internode borer incidence was also recorded in sugarcane plantations across Coimbatore and Erode.



Farmers are advised to release the egg parasitoid *Trichogramma*. Farmers are also advised to set up yellow sticky trap to monitor the pest population and again spray neem seed kernel extract.

The university also says there is a strong possibility of sucking pests like papaya mealybug, spiraling whitefly, woolly aphids in pulses, hoppers and mealybugs in cotton attacking agricultural and horticultural crops due to the continuous prevailing drought.

"If any incidence is noted, farmers are requested to release parasitoids for managing this pest," said the advisory.

### **Forest dept banks on farmers to increase state's tree cover**

The forest department, finding it difficult to sustain plantations along roads and canals has decided to target farmers to increase the state's green cover. The department has decided to give a subsidy of Rs 20 per tree to encourage tree plantation along field boundaries.

Forest officials said various department, including the roads and buildings department, refused permission to plant trees along roads, as these get cut for road widening by the time they are fully grown. In many cases, getting permission from the forest department delays the start of civic works.

Officials said that even canal-side plantation isn't permitted and the department now wants to promote planting trees along field boundaries, a model that has been successful in Anand, Mehsana and Surendranagar.

The department has decided to give a subsidy for trees planted along field boundaries. The department will pay Rs 20 per tree in four years and the ceiling will be 1,000 trees per field.

Jagdish Prasad, additional principal chief conservator of forests (social forestry) said: "As soon as the farmer plants 1,000 trees, he will be paid Rs

8,000, i.e Rs 8 per tree. The remaining Rs 12 will be provided over three years, at Rs 4 per tree per year.

However, the farmer will have to ensure that at least 5,000 trees survive at the end of four years. Once these trees are grown, the farmer may cut them and sell them in the market. The department aims to plant 70 lakh trees this year," he said. He said the scheme will now be open to all farmers, earlier it was restricted to unproductive land and marginal farmers.

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **Punjab releases Rs 2,612.50 crore for payment towards wheat procurement**



Punjab on Friday released Rs 2,612.50 crore to pay for wheat procured during the current rabi marketing season, offering relief to farmers who were worried about payments because of central bank curbs on cash credit limit.

CHANDIGARH: Punjab on Friday released Rs 2,612.50 crore to pay for wheat procured during the current rabi marketing season, offering relief to farmers who were worried about payments because of central bank curbs on cash credit limit meant for food grain purchase.

The Akali Dal-BJP coalition government was in a spot of bother after the Reserve Bank of India held back the credit. The RBI had also told banks to make provisions against loans given to Punjab for purchase of grains, suspecting large shortages in the grains bought. The state had refuted it, maintaining that the costs showed were the actuals for procurement, storage and transportation of grains.

Farmers were awaiting lifting of their wheat from mandis as the procurement process was delayed due to the debacle. On Wednesday, much to the relief of the Punjab government, the RBI sanctioned a cash credit limit of Rs 17,523 crore for wheat procurement.

While announcing that issue of payments to farmers has been resolved, Punjab Food and Civil Supply Minister Adaish Pratap Singh Kairon said all transactions have been electronically documented and payments have been disbursed. He said from Friday, transactions would be done regularly and that the pending payments would be cleared within two days.

So far, 66.55 lakh tonnes of wheat has been procured in the state, the minister said. Of this, government agencies bought 65.62 lakh tonnes. The government would ensure that every grain is lifted during the current procurement operations, he said.

The minister assured farmers that with the approval of the cash credit limit, farmers would be paid for their crop within 48 hours of procurement.

### **Experts say timely pre-monsoon rainfall needed to boost water level**

India's major reservoirs had water only up to a fifth of their capacity this week, lower than a year earlier as well as the 10-year average.

NEW DELHI: India's major reservoirs had water only up to a fifth of their capacity this week, lower than a year earlier as well as the 10-year average. Experts said the situation is worrisome, but it can change if pre-monsoon rainfall is on time.

The 91 key reservoirs held 34.082 billion cubic metres of water as of April 21, compared to 52.178 bcm a year earlier and the 10-year average of 45.08 bcm. These reservoirs have a combined capacity of 157.799 bcm and get 80-85% of water during the June-September monsoon season.



India has total capacity to store 253.388 bcm of water.

The Central Water Commission, which monitors water level in major reservoirs across the country, has said that the most deficient river basin is the Krishna, which caters to Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The Indus, Tapi, Mahi and Cauvery river basins have deficient water. However, Kutch, Mahanadi, Ganga, Sabarmati and Narmada rivers have normal water in the basin.

For the past five weeks, reservoirs from Nagarjuna Sagar, Bhima (Ujjani), Jayakwadi and Girna have had no water. The Yeldari reservoir had 1% water of the normal storage while in Salanadi and Lower Bhawani reservoirs it was 13% of the normal storage.

The situation was much better in Vanvillas Sagar and Mettur reservoirs, with the water level at half of the normal capacity, CWC said.

The CWC has issued an advisory for state governments on judicious use of water for irrigation, drinking and industrial purposes.

The government has launched a number of projects to augment water storage capacity. Currently, 80 projects are underway, of which 40 projects are likely to be completed by next year and help irrigate an additional 8 million hectares.

### **Punjab government's liquidity woes chronic: India Ratings**



The state has also been among the largest borrowers this facility, notes a report by ratings firm India Ratings. (Representative image)

MUMBAI: The government of Punjab's liquidity woes appear to be chronic as it has regularly availed Reserve Bank's Ways and Means advances (WMA) facility, a temporary liquidity support by the RBI which is extended for a few days to meet its temporary revenue mismatches in the government's cash flows. The state has also been among the largest borrowers this facility, notes a report by ratings firm India Ratings.

The liquidity situation has become worrisome since FY'12. In FY'17 (budget estimate), Punjab proposes to use Rs 19,500 crore from WMA facility of RBI, up from Rs 17000 crore in FY'16 (revised estimate) and Rs 9268 crore in FY'15. The number of days the state has availed this facility has gone up

from 136 days in FY'12 to 315 days in FY'15. In addition, the number of times it has availed an overdraft after exhausting the WMA limit too has been going up, indicating the precarious state of Punjab government's finances.

The WMA and overdraft from RBI is a facility that a state and the central government uses in addition to regular market borrowing which are availed at the prevailing repo rates and an additional penal rate of 2% respectively. The WMA facility was introduced in 1997 in order to restrict liquidity support from the RBI by governments and discontinue the practice of automatic monetisation of debt, a practice under which governments borrowed without restraint.

The state's liquidity problem is so acute that from time to time it has even used mortgaged assets namely Gandhi Vanita Ashram for widows in Jalandhar and the state jails at Bathinda, Amritsar and Goindwal to raise cash from banks, says India Ratings.

The liquidity squeeze has been compounded by rising debt, where the total outstanding liabilities have more than doubled since FY09, and is the second highest (among non-special states) as a percent of gross state domestic product at 31.4% (FY16BE). The government also proposes to take over Rs 15632crore debt from the Punjab State Power Corporation Limited under Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana

Punjab has recently been in the news, as 30 banks led by the State Bank of India decided to freeze lending to the state because stock of food grains worth Rs 20000 crore against which banks had lent to state government agencies went missing from godowns in Punjab.

The state claims to have procured these food grains after taking loans from these banks.

As a result, RBI had asked the banks to make provision for losses on food grain-related loans issued to the state. The central bank has allowed the state

a cash credit limit of Rs 17523 crore, towards the first installment for the procurement of wheat during the ongoing rabi season.

### **Modi government sets up panel, kickstarts plan to double farmer income in 6 years**



"The committee will chalk out a plan to shift farm policies from being production-oriented to based on incomes," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

NEW DELHI: The government has set up a panel to prepare a blueprint for doubling farmers' income by 2022, as promised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The committee will chalk out a plan to shift farm policies from being production-oriented to based on incomes," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

The eight-member panel will identify potential areas of agriculture where more investment should happen and suggest ways to reduce the risk of farming by diversifying to horticulture and allied activities like livestock and fisheries to boost income, the official added.

The government's decision to set up the committee follows the budget announcement that set a target of doubling farm incomes by 2022.

The inter-ministerial panel, which is expected to submit the report in two months, will also look at reducing the cost of cultivation and addressing unpredictability of weather and price fluctuations in farm sector.

"The government is focusing not only on increasing crop yields but also on reducing the cost of cultivation to increase the net income of farmers. The schemes on soil health card, neem-coated urea and per drop more crop, are aimed at bringing down the cost of cultivation," the official said.

Besides, the government is trying to address the unpredictability in agriculture due to market fluctuations, and due to weather by setting up an electronic National Agriculture Market and implementing a new crop insurance scheme, he added.

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### **Govt to release 10,000 tonnes of pulses from buffer stock**

Although retail prices of pulses have eased from the last year's level of Rs 200 per kg, rates are still ruling high at Rs 83-177 per kg range in most parts of the country.

NEW DELHI: The government will release 10,000 tonnes of pulses from its buffer stocks to boost supply in the domestic market and check any price rise.





The Centre has also directed state governments to keep a close watch on the prices and to take stringent action against hoarding of the commodity.

Although retail prices of pulses have eased from the last year's level of Rs 200 per kg, rates are still ruling high at Rs 83-177 per kg range in most parts of the country.

"The Centre has decided to release 10,000 tonnes pulses mainly tur and urad from buffer stock to ensure their availability at reasonable prices," an official statement said.

The Centre asked the state governments to avail this benefit and utilise the available stocks for managing the prices of pulses in their respective state.

It has asked states to project their demand of pulses immediately to ensure timely allocation from the buffer stock.

A buffer stock of 50,000 tonnes has been created to deal with any price rise.

Pulses prices are under pressure due to fall in domestic production in the wake of back-to-back drought.

Meanwhile, the Centre has already empowered the states to impose stock limits on the pulses to ensure easy availability.

The government agencies have made procurement of about 50,000 tonnes of pulses from farmers during the Kharif Marketing season 2015-16 and has contracted 25,000 tonnes of pulses for import.

The government is also initiating procurement of rabi pulses and has targeted to procure around 1,00,000 tonnes of chana and masoor to build the buffer stocks further.

"SEBI has decided to implement various regulatory measures on Chana contracts which include increase in the margin requirement to discourage speculation and to moderate the price volatility in forward market," the statement said.

In order to encourage pulses production, the government has already increased MSP for pulses, by Rs 275 per quintal for tur and urad, and by Rs 250 per quintal for moong.

As per the agriculture ministry's second estimate, pulses production is estimated at 17.33 million tonnes in 2015-16 crop year (July-June), marginally higher than the previous year's production of 17.15 million tonnes.

India is the world's largest producer of pulses, but its domestic demand outstrips production. The shortfall is met through imports.