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THE HINDU

Chittoor groundnut ryots stand to gain, say officials

The two-day Roanu cyclone effect has brought much-needed relief to the farmers of the tail-end Chittoor district, with an average rainfall of 11 cm distributed in eastern and western mandals.

Unlike the November 2015 rains, the latest spell did not cause any damage anywhere in the district. Agriculture officials observe that the brief spell in May would be of much help to the farmers getting ready for the groundnut crop from the second week of June.

District Collector Siddarth Jain speaking to the media here on Thursday said that the two-day rain, equally distributed in many parts of the district, was only a prelude to the Southwest monsoon. He said the entire district administration is gearing up to make the ongoing “Neeru-Chettu” programme a grand hit, intended to conserve rainwater and recharge of groundwater levels.

Prior to the November 2015 rains, the groundwater levels stood below 30.47 metres, and the current status is at 13.31 metres. The Collector attributed the scenario to the Neeru-Chettu programme in the district. Mr. Jain said that as many as 2,000 works related to water conservation were under progress for which over Rs. 160 crore was spent.

Groundwater Dept. working out recharge plans

The Department of Groundwater is in the process of preparing groundwater recharge plans for specific mandals based on the 25-year history of groundwater levels in them.

The Andhra Pradesh government is giving utmost importance to water conservation. Water could be stored on the surface in streams and ponds or underground. While water on the surface is subject to evaporation, groundwater is available for a longer period even in the dry season.

Groundwater Joint Director A. Varaprasada Rao said the amount of water needed to increase the height of the water table by one metre was calculated after analysing the groundwater levels of the specific areas for the past 25 years.



Citing the example of different mandals in Krishna district, he said that 0.25 tmcft was required for raising the groundwater table by one metre in 21 upland mandals. The government has made a policy decision to take steps to maintain the ideal groundwater table levels of between 3 metres below ground level and 8 metres below ground level. These charts will come in handy to achieve the targets.

Similarly five mandals – Musunuru, Bapulupud, Avanigadda, Penamalu and Mopidevi – require between 0.25 and 0.5 tmcft for raising the water table by 1 metre. Another ten mandals mostly in the delta area—Challapalli, Pedaparupudi, Vuyyuru, Kankipadu, Pamidimakkala, Thotlavalluru, Ghantasala, Gudivada, Pamarru and Movva—and one upland mandal — Ungutur— required between 0.5 and 1.0 tmcft to raise the water table by one metre. Using the formula the amount specified by the department would be multiplied by the number of metres the water table needs to be raised.

Unfortunately, nothing could be done for the recharging of water table in 13 coastal mandals where the groundwater has already been subject to ingress of salinity.

These maps created by the Groundwater Department would be circulated to the line departments like irrigation, rural water supply, agriculture and

revenue so that various water harvesting structures were planned to conserve rainwater.

There were various methods to harvest rainwater. Mr. Varaprasada Rao said: “Impounding rainwater is not always possible. Both permanent and temporary structures could be used to slow down the flow of water so that there was more percolation into the ground. Even blocking of a channel with a bundle of straw acted as a temporary rainwater harvesting structure,” Mr. Varaprasada Rao said.

Farmers once bitten, twice wary of preparing for sowing

Despite pre-monsoon rain, farmers prefer to wait and watch before starting farm activities



Hesitant: While in some parts of the State preparations for sowing has begun, in others, farmers are not ready to jump into farming activity given their experience of drought.— File Photo

While pre-monsoon showers and forecast of a good monsoon has perked up the hopes of farmers of the Bombay Karnataka and central Karnataka region, leading to start of preliminary farm activities, not all farmers are ready to jump into farming activity given their past experience of drought.

In Ballari district, farmers can be seen ploughing and levelling ground, making it ready for sowing for the kharif season in the rain-fed areas. But, in

other places, people are yet to venture out, since they are waiting for a couple of bouts of heavy pre-monsoon showers to start work. In the first fortnight of May, Ballari received an average rainfall of around 24.6 mm as against the average normal rainfall of 22.5 mm. The sowing target for the kharif season in the district is around 3.65 lakh hectares of which 2.09 lakh ha is rain-fed and 1.55 lakh is irrigated.

In Haveri and Dharwad district, the situation is not very different. While Agriculture Department officials say the climate is conducive to begin farm activities, not many have completed pre-sowing preparations. Unpredictable climate has delayed the beginning of farm activities, said Basavaraj from Guttal in Haveri.

In Raichur district, farm activities have begun thanks to early and good rainfall, and ploughing began last week. Agriculture Department officials said around 40 per cent of the lands in rain-fed areas, particularly in Lingasugur, Deodurg and Raichur taluks, are already prepared for sowing cotton, red gram, bajra and other crops.

In the irrigation belt across Sindhanur and Manvi taluks, farmers have prepared their fields for sowing green gram, hoping to harvest it before the transplant of paddy begins.

In Chitradurga, however, the majority of the onion farmers have prepared their fields for sowing in anticipation of good rainfall. Last year's good profit in onion cultivation is likely to lead to a 30 per cent increase in the area of cultivation too.

(With inputs from M. Ahiraj in Ballari, Pradeepkumar Kadkol in Chitradurga, and Kumar Buradikatti in Raichur)

Despite the

pre-monsoon rain, farmers prefer to wait before starting farming activities

TNAU college to study environmental impact of TNPL unit

TNPL has sanctioned Rs. 49.16 lakh for conducting the study

Tamil Nadu Agricultural University – Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Institute at Navalur Kuttapattu near here has been assigned the responsibility of ascertaining the environmental quality following the setting up of the paperboard industry at Mondipatti area near Manapparai in the district, where the Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Paper Limited (TNPL) has set up its unit for producing paperboard.

The TNPL has sanctioned Rs. 49.16 lakh to the TNAU towards meeting the expenses for the study which had been taken up in a systematic manner through periodical survey. Apart from project coordinators, research scholars of the college have been involved in the project which, among other things, aims at ascertaining the impact of discharge of treated wastewater from the industry on the fields.

The experiments will ensure environmental protection and guide the TNPL towards corrective and remedial measures whenever needed, according to sources.

Conservation of textures of soil in and around Mondipatti area will be the primary concern. Focus would be given to maintaining the quality in ground water, according to sources.

Global positioning system (GPS) technique is adopted for ascertaining the soil productivity and groundwater quality in the area. “Moreover, the subsurface movement of salts in soil will be monitored continuously by installing piezometers,” the source added. The role of scientists of the institute will be instrumental in ensuring proper maintenance of groundwater quality for irrigation purpose. It would suggest the right type of crop to be raised suited to the Mondipatti area. Already, the area has low to medium fertile soil.

The factory will register its maximum production in course of time. However, the TNAU has taken samples of the water and soil for analysing the pre-discharge nature of the soil. A sustained study during the course of discharge of waters from the factory when its production reaches full swing,

would indicate the changes. The project would involve erection of anaerobic high rate reactors, according to sources.

A Centre of Excellence for Soil Health will be set up at TNAU Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Centre. State-of-the-art equipment and infrastructure, including buildings, will be set up. The centre would analyse the soil condition across the State and evolve ways and means for remedial measures.

Groundnut seed distribution begins in Anantapur

3.90 lakh quintals to be distributed to farmers across the district

Civil Supplies Minister Paritala Sunitha on Thursday inaugurated the groundnut seed distribution programme at the Anantapur market yard along with collector Kona Sasidhar, formally kicking off the annual seed distribution programme ahead of the kharif season.

Ms. Sunitha said the seed distribution programme was being inaugurated in all mandal centres across the district by the respective legislators or MLCs . She said 3.90 lakh quintals of groundnut seed was expected to be distributed to farmers across the district.

A maximum of three bags each of 30 kg of seed would be given to any farmer based on the acreage owned by the farmer, at a cost of Rs. 1,500 per bag, post-subtraction of the subsidy being given by the government, said Mr. Sasidhar.

He said the district administration had also inaugurated a novel method of distribution to ensure that all eligible farmers got their entitlement of seeds while pilferage was eliminated.

A system in which each farmer would be identified by his Aadhaar card and the associated biometric details identifying the person in front of the seed distribution official would ensure that pilferage was all but eliminated, while no eligible farmer needs to go back empty-handed.

The system has been readied and seems to be working flawlessly, said Mr. Sasidhar.

He appealed to the farming community to exercise restraint at the seed distribution centres assuring them that seeds were brought to the district in adequate quantum and all would get their entitlement Mr. Sasidhar said 21,000 farm ponds had been constructed in the district, while 58,000 more were in various stages of completion, placing the district not only the first in the state in the Panta sanjeevani programme, but also the most enabled to trap the coveted rainwater and increase the acquifiers.

Mango mela from tomorrow



With the aim of educating farmers and the public about the need to cultivate and consume carbide-free mangoes, the Horticulture Department will hold a mango mela from May 21 to 23.

The mela will be held near Cauvery Park and growers will sell their produces at 10 stalls, K. Rudresh, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department, told presspersons on Thursday.

According to Mr. Rudresh, the growers from Ramanagaram district will also bring different varieties of fruits.

The Karnataka State Mango Marketing and Development Board and the Horticultural Producers' Cooperative Marketing and Processing Society Ltd. (HOPCOMS) are supporting the event.

Maharashtra: Govt to bring 6.61 lakh hectares of sugarcane under drip irrigation

The chief minister had convened a meeting on issues related to ministry of agriculture on Thursday.



Photo for representational purpose The Maharashtra government Thursday set a definite target of bringing 6.61 lakh hectares of agricultural land cultivating sugarcane under drip irrigation. At a meeting held in Mumbai, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said the drought mitigation measures will be of no help if stern action is not taken to stop the unaudited lifting of water for sugarcane cultivation.

“The state government cannot compromise and let water-intensive crops like sugarcane to use unlimited amount of water in the drought-stricken districts of Marathwada. Sugarcane cultivation across Maharashtra should be brought under drip irrigation by 2019,” Fadnavis said.

The chief minister had convened a meeting on issues related to ministry of agriculture on Thursday. Agriculture Minister Eknath Khadse, Minister for

Cooperation Chandrakant Patil and Minister of State Ram Shinde were present at the meeting. Fadnavis added, “The Israel model of ‘more crop per drop’ has become a necessity. We need to implement this model right away.”

Centre, state food ministers to meet, discuss rising prices of essential commodities

The day-long meeting will be chaired by Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh and Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman besides senior officials of the central and state departments.



Retail pulses prices are still ruling high at over Rs 190 per kg in most parts of the country due to fall in domestic output because of poor monsoon. Express Photo/Vinay Singh The Centre has convened a meeting of state food ministers on May 21 to chalk out strategies to jointly tackle rising prices of pulses and other essential commodities. The day-long meeting will be chaired by Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh and Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman besides senior officials of the central and state departments.

“High on the agenda of the meeting will be discussion on measures required to check unreasonable increase in prices of some food items, especially, pulses, edible oils and sugar,” an official statement said.

The meeting will discuss the action plan to contain prices, including strengthening the price monitoring mechanism, coordinated strategy to

check hoarding and use of Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) to ensure easy availability of these commodities, it said. Retail pulses prices are still ruling high at over Rs 190 per kg in most parts of the country due to fall in domestic output because of poor monsoon.

That apart, the Centre will also review the implementation of National Food Security Law, which has so been rolled out in 33 states and union territories.

Ensuring online allocation to all fair price shops, coverage of more ration shops with bio-metric devices and strengthening redressal system will also be deliberated upon during the meeting. Besides this, the meeting will also discuss about expediting “online procurement” which include registering farmers details like mobile numbers, account numbers for sending messages and making direct payment to farmers through system generated cheques.

Agriculture sector reforms for marketing farmers’ produce will also be one of the agenda items of the meeting, the statement added.

CM Devendra Fadnavis meets Rajnath Singh, seeks drought relief funds

The state government has sought a package of Rs 7,188 crore for Vidarbha and Marathwada.



Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has sought a supplementary package from the Centre to tackle drought in 28,000

villages of Maharashtra, in a meeting with Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Fadnavis said, “The state government has already submitted a memorandum seeking a supplementary drought package after it included 12,500 more villages in the list of 15,500 villages which were declared drought-hit.”

The state government has sought a package of Rs 7,188 crore for Vidarbha and Marathwada. It has also sought a Rs 2,500 crore package for tackling the drought in villages in western Maharashtra.

Of the total 40,000 villages, at least 15,500 are facing serious water scarcity and 12,500 are reeling under agriculture drought. On May 7, the Chief Minister made a comprehensive presentation at a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The state has placed a Rs 30,000 crore package for both short and long term measures which includes funds for 26 irrigation projects under the Prime Minister Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY). Fadnavis revealed, “The Centre has already given us Rs 3,500 crore.

We are seeking Rs 9,500 crore for relief and irrigation projects for the chronic districts under drought in regions of Vidarbha, Marathwada and western Maharashtra.”

The drought mitigation plans for the 16 worst-hit districts are being considered by the Centre. The funds are required for 132 irrigation projects, of which 98 are in Vidarbha, which would require Rs 4,098 crore.

In Marathwada, for 38 projects the amount required is Rs 3,090 crore. Earlier, the state had send its proposal for Rs 4,000 crore drought aid to the Centre, which has provided Rs 3,500 crore.

Unlike in the past, this is also the first time the state government has decided to extend the relief compensation package for crop losses in rabi season.

Marine exports may miss \$6-b target on weather woes, global slowdown



India's seafood exports seem to have missed the \$ 6 billion target in FY16 mainly because of global volatilities, anomalies in aquaculture production and depletion of ocean catches.

The sector ended up with only \$4.5 billion worth marine exports in dollar terms against the \$5.5 billion registered FY15. In rupee terms, it registered only ₹29,000 crore against the previous fiscal's ₹33,000 crore.

Provisional figures available with Marine Products Exports Development Authority (MPEDA) says that there was also a drop in quantity terms, as the figure stood at 9.25 lakh tonnes against 10.5 lakh achieved in the previous financial year.

Attributing global recession, low catch, currency fluctuations as reasons for the dismal performance, MPEDA sources said that the agency would soon come out with the final statistics in marine products exports after compiling the figures received from other centres.

V.Padmanabhan, National President of the Seafood Exporters Association told Business Line that “the figures may not be encouraging compared to the previous year. However, there is no need for a concern, as exports in most of the sectors are on a downward curve due to compelling international factors. Marine products exports are in a better state comparatively”.

Citing slowdown in European markets and last year’s floods and cyclones in Tamil Nadu and Andhra for the gloomy performance, he told Business Line that inclement weather has considerably affected aquaculture production, which constitutes a major chunk of India’s seafood export basket. This has resulted in the declining of unit price of shrimps especially Vannamei varieties, impacting turnover of several seafood companies. The dwindling catch from the sea due to climatic changes, over fishing also added fuel to the problem.

According to Padmanabhan, the rise in production cost is a major threat to farmed shrimps in the country. He urged the government to take stringent action against unauthorised hatcheries, which supply low quality seeds to farmers, as it considerably contributed a drop in production in aquaculture farms especially in the East Coast.

However, he is confident of increasing the aquaculture output at the highest level especially with the active support extended by the Union Commerce Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman and the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N.Chandrababu Naidu in solving the issues of various stakeholders including quarantines, multiplication centres hatcheries, exporters, feed manufacturers, farmers etc.

Andhra Pradesh, he said, is preparing an action plan with time line in co-ordination with SEAI and other departments responsible to implement them. A committee is being constituted to develop a strategy and action plan covering all types of fish/shrimp for integrated development considering both short term and long term, he said.

Referring to the depletion of ocean catch resources, he said SEAI is taking up the matter with Union Agriculture and Commerce Ministries for the enforcement of a Fisheries Conservation Policy to enable a sustainable coastal fishery resource to be followed by all the nine coastal states.

Cyclone ‘Roanu’ may intensify, headed for Bangladesh

Cyclone ‘Roanu’ remained practically stationary about 80 km south-southeast of Machilipatnam, 290 km south-southwest of Visakhapatnam and 160 km south-southwest of Kakinada on Thursday afternoon.

According to the India Met Department, it would move north-northeastwards along and off the coast of Andhra Pradesh and intensify into a severe cyclone by the same night.

May weaken

As it moves further northeastwards over the seas, it is likely to weaken a round before crossing the South Bangladesh coast between Khepupara and Cox’s Bazar on Saturday night/Sunday morning.

The US Joint Typhoon Warning Centre had pointed to the possibility that the cyclone may weaken before it makes a landfall over Bangladesh.

But parts of Gangetic West Bengal and the Northeastern States of India are likely to come within the footprint of the wind fields associated with the cyclone.

The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts agrees with this outlook as the system makes a landfall in areas in East and Northeast India ‘too close for comfort.’

The Met has forecast heavy to very heavy rain with heavy to very heavy falls at a few places and extremely heavy falls over Coastal Andhra Pradesh on Thursday.

Heavy rain

Heavy to very heavy rainfall has also been forecast for isolated places over Odisha, Assam and Meghalaya. Heavy rain is likely over the hills of Gangetic West Bengal, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, Telangana and Rayalaseema.

Thunderstorms accompanied with squall are forecast for Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal and Odisha.

Squally winds reaching speeds of 45-55 km/hr and gusting to 65 km/hr are likely along and off the coast of North Tamil Nadu and Puducherry; between 90 and 100 km/hr gusting to 110 km/h along and further to between 100-110 km/hr and gusting to 120 km/hr along and off North Coastal Andhra Pradesh; and between 60-70 km/hr along and off the Odisha coast.

Fishermen are advised not to venture out along and off the coasts of North Tamil Nadu, Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts.

Left ‘drained’

The passage of cyclone ‘Roanu’ would leave the Arabian Sea ‘drained’ of vital energy used up to host and sustain the cyclone and overseeing its movement and landfall. According to the European Centre for Medium-Range Forecasts, the Arabian Sea would relapse into a stupor, and it will take some time for it to come back to life again.

The European Centre shows monsoon winds over the Arabian Sea as waning by the end of May 30, which is the normal time for the monsoon to make an onset over Kerala.

USFDA to train Indian shrimp exporters on compliance norms

The US Food and Drug Administration, which has for some time been engaged with Indian regulators and technical officials in training how to comply with the country’s shrimp importing norms, has now shifted its focus to train local marine export community.

Mathew T Thomas, Director, USFDA India Office, told *BusinessLine*, “We are now training people involved in fishing and exporting of shrimps. We have recently had such sessions in Vizag and Kochi.”

The USFDA refused 208 seafood entry lines in March of which 17 or 8.2 per cent (seven companies from three different countries including India), were of shrimp related to banned antibiotics residue.

The US agency had also trained pharmaceuticals industry insiders and regulators in 2014 and 2015 regarding US quality and safety norms compliance including that on good manufacturing practices, Thomas said.

“USFDA and Indian authorities are moving towards designing a national action plan in these areas,” he observed.

Antibiotics residue and anti-microbial residue in Indian shrimps, chickens and livestock has been attracting attention of the US authorities.

An USFDA official said that in certain cases of imports from India pre-shipment inspection was being done by USFDA. “We have been exchanging notes on quality and safety inspections. In future, we look forward to sharing inspection reports,” he added.

This cooperation is a result of an MoU last year between the Export Inspection Council, under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the USFDA. The MoU is to “serve as a precursor for product specific memoranda of understanding” between the Indian and US agencies in the areas of “food safety and sharing expertise in support of mutually beneficial public health outcomes”.

Good Agricultural Practices award for Telangana mango farm

A mango farmer, J Srikanth Reddy from Karimnagar district of Telangana, has achieved the distinction of becoming the first to get his farm certified for quality as per the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP).

The farm certified under the INDGAP scheme is supported by eFresh Healthy Food Happy Life Pvt Ltd, a subsidiary of eFresh Portal Pvt Ltd. in Hyderabad through its Farmers Development Centre at Jagtial in the district, says Srihari Kotela, Managing Director.

Under the scheme, the farm is inspected and certified by approved accredited agency Food Cert India Pvt. Ltd. (a 100 per cent subsidiary of TATA Projects Ltd).

As a part of the certification process, the fruit is tested for food safety for 34 chemicals.

For Srikanth, the immediate benefit has been the increase in price that the Banganapalli variety grown on his 5.2-acre farm in Narshimulapally village.

Not so sweet mango season down South



Summer is not just about sweat and heat. The season is also about quenching your thirst for king of fruits – mangoes that hit the shelves in various sizes and forms.

So it is a bit of a disappointment for mango lovers as this season was marked by high prices on low output.

Mango cultivators in the State witnessed close to 30-40 per cent fall in production due to insufficient rainfall and harsh weather conditions.

In Tamil Nadu, mangoes are cultivated on 1.15 lakh acres of land. The produce is consumed across India and a small percentage is exported to Singapore and Malaysia from Chennai.

A Jayabal, President, Salem Mango growers and traders Association, said, “During flowering period, till January, we received good rainfall. Due to lack of rain and excessive heat between January and March around 20-30 per cent of buds withered resulting in poor yield.”

Though the quality was not compromised, size of the fruits are smaller and pricier than last year.

For example, the Banganapalli variety cost ₹30/kg last year against ₹50-60 now. Most of the vendors procure mangoes from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, which were hit by unseasonal rainfall and high temperature.

PB Murali, Joint Secretary, Tamil Nadu Mango Growers Federation, said, “Due to harsh weather conditions, there was a huge gap in demand and supply of mangoes in April. But with supplies coming from Gujarat in last few days, prices have stabilised and are expected to remain the same.”

Reduction in yield has affected exports as well. Srinivasan A, proprietor of Srinvasa Exports, said, “We were not able to procure enough produce for export from our sources in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. So we are not planning to export mangoes this year.”

Another supplier, Vanaja Lakshmanan, proprietor of Sun Star Exports said inter-State demand for the mangoes is good.

Due to unavailability of enough mangoes in the market, the exporter is unable to cater to the demand.

Malaysian experts hint at firming up of palm oil prices

The Malaysian Palm Oil Council today predicted that palm oil prices would firm up over the next five-six months and that productivity is likely to be affected by about 10 per cent due to the El Nino impact on its output and other oilseeds.

The council also said the export of palm oil from Malaysia to India is likely to go up this year from 3.9 million tonnes as demand for palm oil is projected to go up and amid lower supply of other oils.

Palm oil on the boil Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting on Malaysian India Palm oil event, Yusof Basiron, Chief Executive Officer of Malaysian Palm Oil Council, along with A Fajarazam, Consul General of Malaysia for South India, said, “globally, the production of oilseeds has been impacted due to the adverse impact of El Nino. This is likely to lead to a drop in production of not just oil palm but also soya bean and other oilseeds.”

“This will result in some volatility in the commodity market. This, in turn, will impact palm oil prices, which may increase from \$650 per tonne to \$700 per tonne,” he said.

Malaysia along with Indonesia accounts for a major chunk of the total global palm oil production, with Malaysia accounting for about 35 per cent and producing about 19.96 mt of palm oil. Of this about 3.9 mt was exported to India in 2015, he said.

“The Malaysian palm oil industry is experiencing turbulent times on the back of several factors, both internal and external. And yet we are bullish about the demand from India. We have seen the trade between India and Malaysia grow substantially in past years. Having taken measures to improve yield, we expect to meet the growing demand,” he said.

A Malaysian delegation is in India interacting with industry players to explore the possibility of increasing the usage of palm oil in various other applications beyond cooking.

At the meeting here, palm oil players from within Indian and abroad sought to explore new avenues of collaboration with their counterparts.

India is faced with an import bill of over Rs. 70,000 crore for edible oil, which is next only to petroleum and gold imports.

‘Roanu’ likely to intensify into severe cyclonic storm

The deep depression in the West-Central Bay of Bengal has intensified into a tropical cyclone ‘Roanu’ this morning, an India Met Department update said.

It is located 125 km east-southeast of Machilipatnam, 350 km southwest of Visakhapatnam and 225 km southwest of Kakinada.

‘Roanu’ is expected to move north-northeastward along and off the Andhra Pradesh coast and intensify into a severe cyclonic storm during the next 24 hours.

Subsequently, it would move northeastwards along and off the North Andhra Pradesh and Odisha coasts during the next two days.

No direct hit

The severe cyclonic storm would stay anchored in the seawaters during the forecast period and not threaten India's coast with a direct hit.

Heavy to very heavy rain has been forecast at most places and extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places along coastal Andhra Pradesh today.

Heavy rain is likely over Kerala, Rayalaseema and South Interior Karnataka.

Squally winds reaching speeds of 45-55 km/hr and gusting to 65 km/hr would prevail along off North Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coasts.

Wind speeds will reach 90-100 km/hr and gusting to 110 km/hr have been forecast along and off North Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

High winds are likely along and off the Odisha coast as well.



Farmers get training in agro marketing

To sharpen the marketing skills of the farmers to enhance their farm income, a one-day training programme on "Efficient Marketing of Agricultural Produce" was organized by Punjab Agricultural Management and Extension Training Institute (PAMETI), Punjab Agricultural University (PAU). As many as 19 farmers participated under ATMA, Pathankot.

H.S. Dhaliwal, Director, PAMETI, delivered a session on Road Side Display (RSD) and motivated the farmers to start an entrepreneurial venture for self-marketing of their agricultural produce. RSD is a service in which farmers sell their fresh and processed farm products directly to the consumers by displaying the same on the farm adjoining the highway, he added.

Puneet Singh Thind, National Director of Vegetable Grower Association of India, discussed how to set-up FPO so as to market their own produce rather than selling to multi-national companies or others. While discussing agri-tourism, he highlighted the prospects of farm stay that can also boost the income of farmers.

Ramandeep Singh, an expert from School of Business Studies, PAU dwelt on packaging, labelling and branding of the farm products.

Amrik Singh, Block Agricultural Officer, Pathankot, discussed how the farmers could link production with marketing with special reference to Basmati.

Farmers stay away from market, onion arrivals fall by 30%

The arrival of wholesale onions at the Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee declined by 30% on Thursday as farmers stayed away from the market to avoid selling their produce at extremely low rates.

Around 7,000 quintals of onions were auctioned on Thursday at Lasalgaon, against 10,567 quintals on Wednesday and 13,000 quintals on Tuesday. Most of the farmers did not bring their onions for auction hoping to get better rates for their produce later.

On Wednesday the average price of onions was recorded at Rs 750 per quintal, the price continued to be the same on Thursday.

Sources from Lasalgaon APMC said, "The onions arriving in the market is of summer crop, which have a shelf life of six-seven months. The prices have declined a lot and farmers are not in a hurry to sell their crop. Those who have storage facilities have stored their onions with a hope of getting better prices." He added, "There has been an excess production of onions this year that has led to decline in onion prices."

Santu Zambre, North Maharashtra president of Shetkari Sanghatana said, "The government has not taken any measures to stop the decline in onion prices. Farmers are not even making up their production costs, instead they are suffering huge losses. We had boycotted the onion auction in Yeola

APMC for four days from May 6 to 9 to stall the decline in onion prices. It costs around Rs 1,000 per quintal to farmers for growing onions which is why we want the union government to introduce guarantee rate of Rs 2,000 per quintal to onion farmers and also approve grants to boost onion export."

The prices have stabilised at Rs 750 per quintal for the past two-three days, which is a 25% increase after onion prices had touched two-year low of Rs 600 per quintal on Monday.

The minimum and maximum prices at Lasalgaon APMC on Thursday were recorded at Rs 300 and Rs 951 per quintal, respectively.

In Pimpalgaon APMC, the average onion rates were recorded at Rs 700 per quintal on Thursday.

The minimum and maximum prices were recorded at Rs 425 and Rs 1,010 per quintal, respectively.

Rain brings cheer to farmers in drought-hit villages

The rain triggered by the impending cyclone in Ganjam district brought cheer to farmers of drought-hit villages in the district. The rain is expected to help farmers prepare for kharif season. The district received an average of 7.3mm rain in the last 24 hours, with the highest rainfall recorded in Patrapur (27 mm) and Rangeilunda (26 mm), sources said.

"If the rainfall continues for some more days, it will help the farmers," said Sudhir Rout. He said the wet soil will facilitate ploughing and direct the flow of canal water to the agricultural land. The agriculture officials have tentatively planned paddy cultivation on 2.16 lakh hectares land in the district as against last year's achievement of 2.22 lakh hectares.

"We are planning to reduce the paddy area in upland this year due to the shortage of water for irrigation, which leads to drought-like conditions. Instead of taking up paddy in these areas, we encourage the farmers to go for cultivation of non-paddy crops" said deputy director of agriculture (DDA) Ganjam Sudarshan Mohanty. More than 15,246 hectares of paddy in 16 out of 22 blocks in the district were affected by drought last year.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Monsoon delay may not significantly impact sowing: Shobhana K Patnaik



The delay in arrival of southwest monsoon by a week is unlikely to have any significant impact on sowing of kharif crops, Agriculture Secretary Shobhana K Patnaik said.

NEW DELHI: The delay in arrival of southwest monsoon by a week is unlikely to have any significant impact on sowing of kharif crops, Agriculture Secretary Shobhana K Patnaik said today.

Southwest monsoon has hit Andaman and Nicobar Islands today, but the current cyclone in the Bay of Bengal will "weaken its progress", thereby delaying onset of monsoon in Kerala , as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Normally, it takes 10 days for monsoon to hit Kerala and IMD has projected that it would set over Kerala on June 7 with a model error of plus or minus four days.

"The IMD has forecast six days delay plus or minus four days in arrival of monsoon. We are keeping a close watch. We feel a week's delay in arrival of rains may not have significant impact on the kharif sowing," Patnaik told PTI.

Even if there is delay, rains are expected to make progress after June 7 and boost sowing operation, he said.

Stating that present water level in reservoirs is low, Patnaik said the state governments have been asked to keep ready with district-wise contingency plan in case the monsoon delays further, he said.

The government has positioned sufficient supply of fertilisers, quality and certified seeds and other necessary farm inputs for the kharif sowing at state levels, he added.

Southwest monsoon, the lifeline of India's agriculture, starts in June and its progress triggers sowing of kharif crops like rice, pulses, corn, sugarcane, cotton and soyabean is undertaken.

IMD has forecast above normal rains this year after two consecutive years of drought.

S & P Global Platts reduces India's sugar production estimates to 25.1 million mt

Based on ISMA's update, overall sugar production in the country till end-April in the 2015-16 crop year, was 24.6 million mt, down 11% from a year earlier.

KOLKATA: S & P Global Platts has reduced India's sugar production estimates between October 2015 - September 2016 from 25.6 million mt to 25.1 million mt. The reduction in estimates mainly stems from a sharp fall in output recently, made more evident by ISMA's latest production update on April 30.

There are major reductions in our estimates for two key states -- Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka -- where they were reduced to 6.9 million mt from 7.2 million mt, and 4.1 million mt from 4.2 million mt. Based on ISMA's update, overall sugar production in the country till end-April in the 2015-16 crop year, was 24.6 million mt, down 11% from a year earlier.



In the report titled Kingsman Sugar Supply & Demand update of S&P Global Platts it has been said that production across the country is almost complete for this crop year with only 48 mills continuing with crushing operations currently, compared with 97 a year ago. Of these mills, 35 are in Tamil Nadu, while the rest are in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Haryana. Only one mill is still operating in Uttar Pradesh.

Production in the key state of Maharashtra stood at 8.4 million mt for the 2015-2016 season till end-April, compared to 10.3 million mt a year ago. In the case of UP, the second largest sugar producing state, output for the same period was 6.8 million mt, compared to 7 million mt a year ago. In light of the fast pace of closure of mills across India, given low cane availability on account of dry weather in the 2015-2016 season, ISMA revised its production estimate to just above 25 million mt from 25.7 million mt.

In the case of UP, where a reduction of 300,000 mt in sugar production levels to 6.9 million mt is expected, we see a 3% reduction in average agricultural yields in the state at 51.2 mt/ha, which has resulted in overall

cane availability going down by 7.4% to 70 million mt with sucrose recoveries of 9.8%.

Vegetable prices up due to heatwave, tomato may cost Rs 50/kg



Prices of food articles, which have a 14 per cent weight in the wholesale price index, rose 4.23 per cent in April and vegetable prices rose 2.21 per cent, according to data from the Central Statistics Office.

NEW DELHI: Vegetable prices firmed up in the first fortnight of May as heatwave conditions scorched most parts of the country and traders expect prices to remain volatile, likely affecting consumer inflation this month.

Prices of food articles, which have a 14 per cent weight in the wholesale price index, rose 4.23 per cent in April and vegetable prices rose 2.21 per cent, according to data from the Central Statistics Office. Potato prices surged 35.45 per cent from 3.57 per cent from 3.57 per cent a month ago.

The trend is expected to reverse only after the onset of the monsoon next month and consumers may not have to worry about food prices rising unless the rains are delayed.

"Severe heatwave condition across most parts of India has led to dropping of flowers and fruits, thereby impacting production and increasing prices," said Shriram Gadhawe, president of the All India Vegetable Growers Association in Pune. He said prices were firm and will continue to rise over the next few days. "Tomato currently being sold at Rs 20 a kg in wholesale will touch Rs 50-60 a kg in the next few days," he said.

Rajender Sharma, former chairman of the Azadpur Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee in Delhi, said supplies of vegetables from outside the state, have been slow for the past two weeks and on some days, wholesale prices jumped 50-100 per cent.

"In retail, prices will be 3-4 times higher. In hot weather, losses to the vendor are higher and hence he will keep prices firm," said Sharma, adding that supplies from the Yamuna bank are expected soon. Ladies finger was available for Rs 13-23 a kg in Delhi's wholesale markets and was being sold Rs 60-70 a kg at the retail level. In Pune, tomato wholesale prices were Rs 20 a kg compared with retail rates of Rs 35-40 a kg.

Sugar industry makes a turnaround on back of strong policy and rise in demand for ethanol

The sector has gained handsomely from the use of ethanol, an alcohol that can be produced either by fermenting cane juice or from molasses, a byproduct of sugar mills.

NEW DELHI: India's sugar sector has turned around, helping farmers recover long-pending sugarcane arrears, as mills have been able to make payments with the help of strong policy initiatives including an unprecedented increase in blending ethanol with petrol, which has also saved the country nearly \$300 million in oil imports, officials said.

The changes have significantly eased the sector's plight as sugar output has exceeded demand since 2010, which led to such a glut that sugar prices fell below input costs, wiping out the industry's ability to pay farmers on time, they said. In the past, mills were unable to start operations on time, prompting states to browbeat them with criminal cases. Cane arrears had shot up to Rs 22,000 crore in April 2015, which was about a third of the total value of cane purchased by the industry.

Sweet Dose

Policy initiatives like soft loans with 1-yr moratorium on interest have helped sugar cos

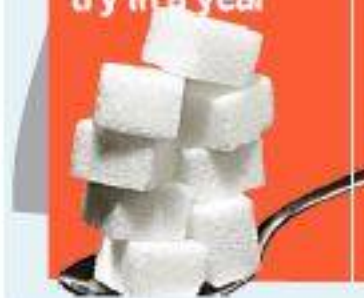
Farmers paid their dues, barring ₹438 cr due to legal or local issues in M'ashtra & K'taka

Sector has gained from use of ethanol for blending in petrol

26-28 mt: Sugar produced by domestic industry in a year

5 mn: No. of persons employed

₹60,000 cr: Worth of cane industry buys from farmers every year



Now all farmers have been paid their dues barring Rs 438 crore due to legal or local issues in Maharashtra and Karnataka, while shares of sugar firms such as Bajaj Hindustan, Balrampur Chini and Mawana Sugars are trading close to their 52-week highs.

The sector has gained handsomely from the use of ethanol, an alcohol that can be produced either by fermenting cane juice or from molasses, a byproduct of sugar mills, officials said. Sale of ethanol for blending in petrol rose to 67 crore litres in 2014-15 from 38 crore litres the previous year, and is expected to double in 2015-16.

This has come as a big relief as the fortunes of India's sugar industry has a direct bearing on millions of people. The industry produces 26-28 mt a year

from 530 mills, employs 5 million people directly or indirectly and buys cane worth more than Rs 60,000 crore from farmers every year.



Officials said that the plunging fortune of farmers and millers prompted the government to take several policy initiatives such as offering soft loans with a one year moratorium on interest payments. Unlike in the past, the banks would pay farmers directly while loans went in the books of the mills.

In 2015-16, banks disbursed Rs 4,305 crore for payment of cane dues. Direct payment to farmers by banks amounted to direct benefit transfer, which reduced arrears substantially, officials said. They said that without this mechanism, mills may have diverted the money or delayed payments to farmers.

Long dry spell affects output in Bengal tea industry

The tea belt in Sub Himalayan West Bengal is under even worse situation where rainfall in the week beginning 4th May has been recorded as 49.4mm with a departure of minus 30% from long duration average. The cumulative rainfall during the whole season here remained 9 % below normal level.

SILIGURI: Although Monsoon is yet to touch the whole country, raindrops have started soaking the soil in different regions. But prolonged dry spell that is still continuing in sub Himalayan West Bengal has already caused heavy production loss to the labour intensive tea industry.



"Tea plantations are always dependent on the whims of weather. So production loss due to adverse weather is nothing new. But the situation this time has gone far from absorbable level for this labour intensive industry. After around 40% production downfall in April, we had 15% less than expected yield in May first half," said veteran planter M. Bansal.

"Beside around 40% green leaf production loss during March April, low rainfall has substantially increased our irrigation and pest management cost pulling up our cost of production. But, the price realization has gone down in the tune of around Rupees 5 to 6 per kg compared to last year same period," said K K Mintry, Chairman TeraiBSE 3.28 % India Planters Association.

Things have become even tougher for the small growers. "Organized big gardens are somehow managing with artificial irrigation. But that is not possible for the small growers. Though exact quantification of production loss is too tough, as per rough estimation, in small tea grower sector in this region it should not be of less than worth Rs 100 crore," said B G Chakroborty. Secretary of CISTA, a national umbrella body for thousands of small tea grower.

Beginning 4th of May, nationwide rainfall for the week has been recorded as favorable 12mm, 3% higher than the long term average for this period. But cumulative rainfall during whole meteorology season beginning 1st March

remained much below normal with only 77.3mm of downpour, around 12% lesser than long term average.

The tea belt in Sub Himalayan West Bengal is under even worse situation where rainfall in the week beginning 4th May has been recorded as 49.4mm with a departure of minus 30% from long duration average. The cumulative rainfall during the whole season here remained 9 % below normal level.

However, the meteorologists have given hope for the silver lining of approaching favourable monsoon. But, "In plantation, a loss once incurred can never be compensated," said Mintry.

Palm oil industry's profits slip 25%, small firms shut shop



India imports nearly 70 percent of its edible oil requirements from Malaysia and Indonesia; the rest is met from domestic production.

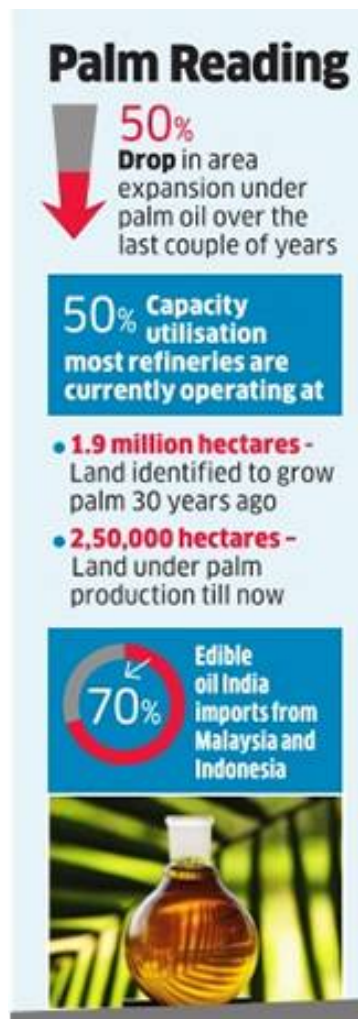
HYDERABAD | KOLKATA: India's palm oil industry saw profits tumble by around 25 per cent last year, burdened by droughts, rising production costs and, chiefly, cheaper imports, forcing several small firms to shut shop, according to industry sources.

India imports nearly 70 per cent of its edible oil requirements from Malaysia and Indonesia; the rest is met from domestic production.

"Area expansion under palm oil fell by over 50 per cent over the last couple of years due to low prices of crude palm oil and poor rainfall," said Sanjay Goenka, chief executive of 3F Oil Palm Agrotech, representing the Oil Palm Developers and Processors Association . "Karnataka and Odisha suffered the most among the oil palm producing states."

Industry experts added that most of the refineries are currently operating at 50 per cent capacity utilisation.

"Almost 30 years ago, 1.9 million hectares of land were identified to grow palm. However, till now only 2,50,000 hectares are under palm production. While a hectare of land can yield 300-400 kg of groundnut oil, nearly 4 tonne of palm oil can be produced from a hectare of land," said BV Mehta, executive director, Solvent Extractors' Association .



Sources said that the Centre has asked the states to look into the issue and Karnataka and Arunachal Pradesh are likely to have exempted companies from the cap on land ceiling.

Vindo TP, research analyst at Geofin Comrade , said that the demand has already picked up pace on account of the upcoming Ramzan festival and is likely to improve from July August.