

01.09.2016

THE HINDU

KRRS seeks changes in National Water Policy



The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha has urged the Union government to change the National Water Policy to incorporate a clause empowering the Centre to take decisions on disputes related to sharing of water for drinking between riparian States.

A KRRS delegation would soon meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi to submit a memorandum in support of this demand, KRRS leader K.S. Puttannaiah, MLA, told a press conference here on Wednesday.

Talking about the verdict of the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal, he stressed the need for continued efforts for an out-of-court settlement. Mr. Puttannaiah alleged that Goa Chief Minister Laxmikant Parsekar was not willing to discuss the matter under the pretext of the elections to the Goa State Assembly to be held in the next four months.

Nothing could be more pathetic than the tribunal refusing to pass even an interim award.

He criticised the Union and State governments for their “inability” to ensure drinking water to the people of the region.

“If the government cannot ensure drinking water to its citizens, what worth does it have? The local government in California [in the United States] arranged drinking water by drawing it from a distance of 2,000 km, but our governments are still not in a position to draw water from sources which were at a distance of hardly 20 km to 25 km,” Mr. Puttannaiah said. He said that not all water-related disputes could be resolved by courts

as it was the primary responsibility of the government to ensure drinking water to its citizens. The courts should be approached only during emergency situations.

“As water is essential for life, the issue of drinking water and disputes related to it should be resolved by the government alone, which was possible through an amendment to the water policy,” Mr. Puttannaiah said. The KRRS would hold a State-level meeting in Bengaluru on September 10 to discuss issues related to sharing of river waters; scientific pricing policy for agricultural commodities; pending sugarcane price dues; and the need for setting up a pay commission for agriculture labourers on the lines of those for government employees.

KRRS State president Chamarasa Malipatil was present.

‘Double effort in breaking yield barriers in production of pulses’

Director-General of the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR) Trilochan Mohapatra has asked agricultural scientists to double their work on breaking yield barriers in pulses production and help the country not only achieve self sufficiency in the field but also tap into the export market for pulses.

Speaking after inaugurating the three-day 21st Annual Group Meet of the All India Coordinated Research Project (AICRP) on Chickpea (Bengal Gram) at the Agriculture College premises in the outskirts of Kalaburagi recently, Dr. Mohapatra told the top agricultural scientists from premier research institutes and universities across the country that the increase in the production levels of the pulses when compared to cereals in the country over the past few decades was minimal. Dr. Mohapatra noted that while the increase in the production of the pulses over the past few decades had doubled, the production of the cereals had increased by five times.

PMO concerned

Dr. Mohapatra said that the Prime Ministers Office (PMO) is highly serious and concerned about the low production levels of the pulses and the dependence of the country on the imports of pulses to meet demand. He added that the PMO has issued a dictum to ICAR and DARE to work to improve the yield of the pulses and achieve self sufficiency in the production.

‘More research needed’

He said much needs to be done with regard to R&D activities to improve the yield of the pulses by coming out with the more number of short-duration and high-yielding varieties. He lamented that even after so many years of research, the country had still not come out with a short-duration pigeon pea (red gram) crop. Latest technology and innovation must be used effectively to come out with new varieties.

Transgenic varieties

Dr. Mohapatra said that in the past decade, “We have been telling the government that we will come out with transgenic varieties of pulses and till date, no progress has been made on this front. The PMO is concerned about this and wants a definite time frame for the release of transgenic variety of pulses. Our scientists must ensure that they come out with a transgenic variety of chickpeas within two years.”

Dr. Mohapatra said that the technology transfer from the lab to the land should be more effective. He questioned why the scientists working on pigeon pea could not come out with a solution to the flower-dropping problem in the crop and why scientists had failed to control the menace through genetic manipulation. He said that many of the innovations made by the scientists were not being used by the farmers and a critical analysis on why the farmers have not adopted these innovations in their practices is required.

The scientists should also attach importance to the value additions to the crop. More than 130 scientists from all over the country are participating in the meet.

Chief Minister to open organic produce fair

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan will inaugurate the district organic farm produce and products fair organised by the CPI(M)-led Janakeeya Jaiva Pachakkari Krishi campaign at Rajendra Maidan on September 4 at 11 a.m.

Film personalities, couple Aashiq Abu and Rima Kallingal will carry out the first sale. The fair, featuring separate stalls for rice varieties including the Pokkali rice from Kadamakkudy under the brand Gramika, egg, jackfruit, plantain and pulses, will be on for nine days, P. Rajeev, CPI(M) district secretary, told the media here on Wednesday. Besides, there would be an eatery offering food made from tubers.

Organic produce cultivated over 750 acres ,will be put up on sale at 257 regional stalls across the district during the Onam season. This is in addition to the 12 permanent outlets selling organic agricultural produces.

Mr. Rajeev said that nearly 25,000 farmers, 1,200 self-help groups and 40 cooperative banks were involved in the massive campaign, which led to the production of huge quantities of vegetables and plantain for Onam.

He said Kanjoor, where organic farming practices received widespread acceptance, saw the farmers process the paddy to bring out their brand of rice.

Feed intake, egg production to be normal

With the district expected to receive light to moderate rains in the next three days, feed intake and egg production is also expected to be normal.

A press release from Agromet Field Unit of Veterinary College and Research Institute and Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai said that the maximum and minimum temperature will be 34 degree Celsius (93.2 degree Fahrenheit) and 24 degree Celsius (75.2 degree Fahrenheit) respectively.

Wind speed will be around 5 km per hour, mostly from west direction. With cloudiness to be moderate, the temperature will be comfort for the poultry.

Since the wind speed is likely to be low, there is no need for side curtain in the raised platform sheds. The release also added that the Southwest Monsoon is expected to last for one more month.

A weather advisory from Krishi Vigyan Kendra here said that prevailing rainfall will be favourable for agriculture.

Farmers are advised to cultivate sorghum, maize and minor millet crops, the release said.

Package for dairy farmers

The district panchayat will be providing schemes worth Rs.1 crore to dairy farmers in the current year, according to Asha Sanil, district panchayat president.

She was speaking at the dairy farmers get-together organised by the Dairy Development Department and Edappally Block Panchayat at Cheranelloor Dairy Cooperative Unit on Wednesday. The package has been devised keeping in the difficulties facing dairy farmers. Ms. Sanil also honoured the highest milk producer in the block on the occasion. Cheranelloor block panchayat president Sony Chikku delivered the keynote address.

CM announces pesticide-free vegetable, fruit scheme

The State government will implement a new scheme to produce vegetables and fruits without residue of pesticides, by employing integrated pest management techniques, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa announced in the Assembly on Wednesday.

She said the scheme would be implemented on about 1.27 lakh acres at a cost of Rs. 10 crore.

The government would give 80 per cent subsidy to farmers for solar-powered pump sets, she said. As promised in her party's election manifesto, Ms. Jayalalithaa also expanded

the scope of integrated farm development on dry lands to 20,055 acre at a cost of Rs. 21.10 crore.

Tractors, multi crop threshers, rotary drill and other equipment would be acquired at a cost of Rs. 21.43 crore and made available to farmers on a rental-basis, she said, adding that subsidy to the tune of Rs. 31 crore would be given to farmers to purchase equipment.

A sum of Rs. 16 crore has been earmarked for cultivating capsicum, cucumber, tomato along with flowers like gerbera, rose, carnation and liliun in green houses on about 3.50 lakh acre.

A 50 per cent subsidy would be given to farmers.

While existing horticulture farms would be modernised at a total cost of Rs. 5.83 crore in Cuddalore, Kancheepuram, Tiruchi, Namakkal, Vellore and Dindigul districts, new horticulture farms would be set up in Tirupur, Ariyalur and Nagapattinam districts this year at a cost of Rs. 2 crore.



GDP growth slows to 7.1 per cent on poor show by agriculture, construction sectors

Indian economy grew at 7.1 per cent in April-June of the current fiscal, its slowest pace in the last six quarters, mainly due to slower growth in construction and agriculture sectors and contraction in the mining sector, as per data released by the Central Statistics Office on Wednesday. Manufacturing and electricity growth pick up pace during the April-June quarter. The growth during the quarter is much lower than 7.9 per cent recorded in January-March and 7.5 per cent registered in April-June last year.

The previous low was 6.6 per cent GDP growth in the October-December quarter of the 2014-15. Gross Value Added (GVA), which is estimated at the basic price, showed a growth of 7.3 per cent in April-June of 2016-17. GDP is calculated by adding taxes to gross value added and subtracting subsidies.

“As expected, GDP growth fell short of the rate of GVA expansion in Q1 FY17, led by the sharp Y-o-Y rise in the food subsidy outgo of the Central government in the just concluded quarter, as opposed to the Y-o-Y decline in fuel subsidies that had taken place during Q1 FY16,” said ICRA senior economist Aditi Nayar.

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Even as GDP growth slowed to a five-quarter low, growth of GVA at basic prices inched up to 7.3 per cent in Q1 FY17 from 7.2 per cent in Q1 FY16, bolstered by a sizable improvement in the growth of the services sector, Nayar said.

Department of Economic Affairs secretary Shaktikanta Das said the government expects economy to grow at close to 8 per cent in 2016-17 due to factors including good monsoon and impact of 7th Pay Commission award, as per a PTI report. "Given the good monsoon which we had this year, the 7th Pay Commission payout effect and various structural reform measures, which the government has taken we expect the growth to be higher than what we achieved last year (7.6 per cent), perhaps close to 8 per cent," Das said.

While mining and quarrying sector contracted at 0.4 per cent in April-June, in contrast to 8.5 per cent expansion during same quarter previous fiscal, agriculture sector growth slowed to 1.8 per cent during the quarter from 2.6 per cent. Construction sector growth also slowed sharply to 1.5 per cent from 5.6 per cent.

Notwithstanding the boost from the aggregate rise in production of rabi crops (led by wheat), which were harvested in April 2016, the drought-like conditions that prevailed in April-June over much of the country, dampened the performance of the summer crops as well as the allied sectors, ICRA said.

Among the sectors that showed a pick up growth included manufacturing, wherein growth rate rose to 9.1 per cent from 7.3 per cent, while electricity, gas, water supply & other utility services registered growth of 9.4 per cent up from 4 per cent. Growth in public administration, defence and other services nearly doubled to 12.3 per cent.

Ficci president Harshvardhan Neotia said industry expects growth to gain momentum in the second half of the current fiscal year. "The good monsoon is a huge positive and an improvement has been noted in the kharif acreage. The agriculture sector performance is likely to pick up giving an impetus to rural consumption. Also, the seventh pay commission is expected to push demand," Neotia said.

Harvesting Solar – in fields!



Of its several new initiatives, the Narendra Modi government has set out at least two very ambitious targets, which are also quantifiable.

One is achieving 100 giga-watts (GW) of solar power generation capacity by the year 2022. The other is doubling farmers' income — presumably in real terms — also by 2022, when India celebrates its 75th year of Independence.

If achieved, both would mark major leaps forward, given the country's current solar generation capacity of barely 8 GW (or 8,000 megawatts) and the past record of farmers' real incomes increasing by a mere 3.5 per cent on a compounded annual growth basis during 2002-03 to 2012-13. If incomes were to, indeed, double in real terms between now and 2022, the corresponding growth rate would work out to 12 per cent per annum!

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So, the question to ask is whether the above targets are really achievable or simply slogans. We believe that the Modi government can definitely make substantial progress in meeting both objectives, provided they are conceived and implemented in unison — a sort of marrying and building on each other.

Our confidence in this stems primarily from the dramatically declining costs of solar power, globally as well as in India, by almost 70 per cent since 2010-11. That, as the accompanying chart shows, has also given a fillip to solar power capacity addition. In the process, solar power has emerged as a competitive source of energy, especially in comparison to that produced from burning of coal. The cost of generating and supplying power through the latter was Rs 5.93/kWh in India in 2013, as per government estimates.

As against this, the bidding rates in most solar power projects today range between Rs 4.3 to Rs 5.5/kWh.