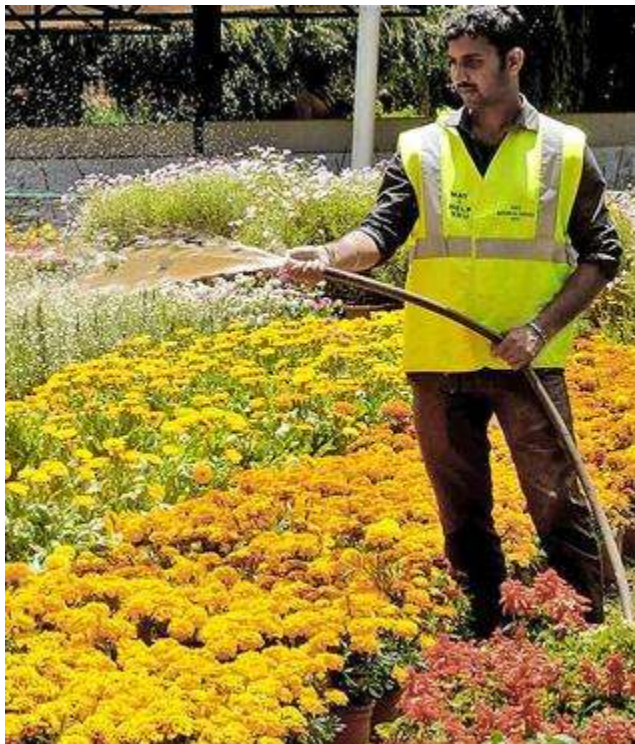


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THE HINDU

Ooty getting ready for second season



Due to the ongoing Cauvery water crisis, and tensions between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu governments being at an all time high, tourist flow into the Nilgiris, especially from Karnataka, has taken a big hit.

Despite this, the hedges continue to be trimmed, the lawn is mowed regularly and the Ooty Botanical Garden is being primed and readied for the hill town's "second season" crowd.

Local economy

The 22-hectare park, maintained by the Horticulture Department, has seen a dip in the number of tourists over the last month due to the Cauvery crisis affecting tourist flows into the Nilgiris. However, with tensions seemingly thawing, it is hoped that tourists from

both Kerala and Karnataka will begin pouring into the Nilgiris in the coming weeks, and help stimulate the local economy that relies heavily on tourism.

Salvias, Daisies, Marigolds, Dahlias, Delphiniums and Asters are among the more than 6,500 plants that are set to be put on public display during the second season, which usually starts in September and continues till the end of October.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Joint Director of Horticulture, The Nilgiris, M Mani, said that the plants were in blossom and a decision on the date for the plants to be exhibited to the public would be made soon.

For more than a week, Karnataka vehicles have been prevented from entering Tamil Nadu for their own protection due to the ongoing Cauvery water issue.

Due to the perception that it is unsafe for tourists to visit the State, the district has seen a fall in the number of tourists from other States, including those from Kerala.

Cheese, ice creams, and everything nice



There's a slab of Caroselle young cheddar sitting inside my refrigerator. Also, a lush tub of chilli-cumin VeggyNAISE. And, I've just finished making a batch of super-soft khaman dhoklas from a mix created by Superb.

All this is the result of an hour's visit to Woodside Farmers Market, held at Union Christian School Grounds, Chetpet, on Sunday. This time around, the vegetables were conspicuous by their absence — they were supposed to come in from Bangalore — but everything else made up for it.

The venue was suffused with the aroma of food — courtesy a stall that sold a Kerala breakfast: fresh appams, cutlets, and non-vegetarian gravies. The next stall had popcorn, another handed out ice slushes.

That's the thing about these Sunday markets... everyone's in a happy mood and in the frame of mind to have a good time, irrespective of parking delays or traffic en route to the venue.

Who can say no when the friendly lady of Veggytable insists you try all four of the dips and the ready-to-cook mockmeat preparations? A stall sold cloth bags, useful to take back all purchases in, and Phokkisham had a rather interesting ice cream made using the milk of native cattle. I sampled the almond version. It was flaky, with bits of ice sticking to a mildly-sweet flavourful ice cream. A throwback to the basic ice cream that mothers would rustle up for kids during summer breaks before fancier versions became the norm.

Gulab's had on offer a range of khakras and chutneys/pickles to go with it. The sweet pickle with spice-flavoured raw mango was delicious. Superb offered samples of hot *varag u pongal* and millet dosa served with tomato chutney and podi.

Astra Dairy sold ghee, and subscriptions to its cow's milk, delivered home in glass bottles. Another stall sold terrace gardening solutions. Sanjivan had cold-pressed groundnut, coconut and gingelly oils and healthy-looking *rasthali* bananas. There was also a range of chutneys made by 101 Strawberries.

The best part? You could also do a spot of good by checking out the stalls of Mellow Circle's Prathyasha Home of Hope for HIV AIDS Children and Y's Men Club of the East's Free Meals on Wheels for Destitutes. The zentangles made by the children were sold out, and about 800 meals were sponsored for destitutes.

Nearly 3,500 people walked into the school grounds for the market, and many returned with bulging bags, and some plants to raise in their homes. And, more importantly, an introduction to an organic lifestyle.

Nearly 3500 people walked into the school grounds for the Sunday fair, and many returned with bulging bags



Seed of hope: Keeping alive traditional methods of rice farming through images



EVER SINCE his childhood, photographer Indrajit Khambe, who stays in the village Kalmath, near Kankavali, had observed his uncles working in the paddy fields. From ploughing, threshing to harvesting the crop, Khambe was fascinated by various methods involved in rice cultivation.

A few years ago, Khambe noticed that a number of farmers from various villagers, near Kankavali, had shifted to modern machines from traditional methods of paddy farming. Before all the farmers adopted modern tools of farming, Khambe decided to document the traditional methods before it becomes a thing of past. Hence two years ago, he launched a photo project – Rice and Life – which covers farmers of 15 villages around Kankavali, who still use traditional ways of rice cultivation. Each village has a population of around 600 to 1,000 people.

“With modernisation, while new methods of farming have been adopted by farmers across the country, over a decade ago, in villages around Kankavali, the farmers

continued to practise traditional methods of paddy farming. There are two reasons for this – one, the farm lands owned by the villagers are small, and two, since Kankavali and the adjoining villages are situated on a relatively higher level, it's difficult for bigger machines to reach here. However, in the last five years, some small tools have been introduced specially for small farm lands and thus, the farmers have started to adopt them,” explains Khambe. While rice is the major crop grown in Kankavali region, farmers also cultivate cashew and mangoes.

Typically, traditional methods of paddy farming include various steps such as ploughing, which involves preparing the fields plows drawn by bulls; fertilising with dung; sowing seeds with hands in seed beds; or sewage, and smoothing (by dragging a log over them). “Earlier, both men and women would do all this manually. But now, for every single step involved in rice cultivation, there is a machine. Over the last two years, I have visited around 15 villages around Kankavali including Kanedi, Janvali, Sakedi and others. Before capturing them in photos while farming, I had conversations with the farmers to understand what made them adopt new ways. The project, he says, will be valued a few years later when traditional methods will be practiced no more and machines will rule the fields,” he says.

Heavy rains in Gujarat raise water level in dams and farmers' hopes

HEAVY RAINS continued in parts of Saurashtra and south Gujarat, including Surat city, for the second consecutive day on Monday, bringing cheers to farmers who otherwise were staring at low yields due to lack of rain and irrigation water. Following the heavy rains, some dams in Saurashtra and south Gujarat regions got fresh inflow.

In Saurashtra, entire Bhavnagar district recorded average 127 mm or more rain in the last 36 hours, concluding at 8 pm Monday. Mahuva with 254 mm registered the highest rainfall in the district. Talaja and Vallabhipur each recorded 203.2 mm, while Bhavnagar city and taluka was lashed by 152.4 mm rain.

Rajkot district also received heavy rain, with Dhoraji, Jetpur and Upleta talukas recording 127 mm precipitation. Moderate to heavy rains were also recorded in Junagadh, Gir-Somnath and Porbandar districts. Other districts like Botad, Devbhoomi-Dwarka, Jamnagar and Surendrangar received moderate rain showers.

Morbi district, which is carrying 40 per cent rain deficit this season, also received good spell of rainfall towards the fag-end of monsoon.

In south Gujarat, the rainfall in different talukas of Surat district are Bardoli 55 mm, Choryasi 57 mm, Mahuva 45 mm, Kamrej 30 mm, Mandvi 40 mm, Mangrol 57 mm, Olpad 26 mm, Umarpada 15 mm and Surat city 80 mm. The rainfall measured in different talukas of Navsari district are Navsari town 70 mm, Jalalpore 60 mm, Gandevi and Vandsa 10 mm, Chikhli and Kherma 5 mm.

Following the heavy rains, Shetrunji dam of Bhavnagar, the largest reservoir in Saurashtra received fresh inflow of water. Malan dam in Mahuva taluka of Bhavnagar overflowed following very heavy rain in its catchment area.

Similarly, water was released from Dhatarvadi-II dam near Rajula in Amreli on Monday to maintain rule level even as level of Dhatarvadi-I also rose. Fresh inflow was recorded in other dams like Bhadhar-II in Rajkot and Khodiyar and Thebi dams in Amreli.

While the latest spell of rain has partially allayed fears of low yield of Kharif crops, Saurashtra region as a whole is still facing around 20 rain deficit. Due to pattern of rainfall this season, major irrigation dams do not have much water till date.

In south Gujarat, Ukai dam, the only source of water for Surat, received has started receiving 64,000 cusecs of rainwater from its catchment areas in Maharashtra forcing the dam authorities to discharge 800 cusecs of water. The water level in the Ukai dam has reached to 335.57 feet while the danger level of the dam is 345 feet.

Many low-lying areas in Surat city were inundated with rain waters. The Tapi river was also flowing bank to bank. The Surat Municipal Corporation authorities have closed weir-cum-causeway as a precautionary measure.

hindustantimes

Tamil Nadu releases water from Mettur dam to irrigate samba paddy crop



Tamil Nadu opened the sluice gates of the Mettur Reservoir here on Tuesday so farmers can cultivate the samba paddy crop in the delta districts.

Water was released for irrigating about 12 lakh acres as the sluice gates were opened in the presence of senior AIADMK ministers Edappadi K Palaniswamy and P Thangamani, among others.

Palaniswamy told reporters that initially 2000 cusecs was being released and this would be gradually be increased to 12,000 cusecs by the evening.

Keeping with the tradition, flowers were dropped into the gushing waters.

Water from the dam was normally released on June 12 but this year, it could not be done following low storage levels as the AIADMK government had approached the Supreme Court, seeking direction to Karnataka to release 50 tmcft to it.

While the court had, on September 5, ordered 15,000 cusecs daily for ten days, it later modified its order, asking Karnataka to release 12,000 cusecs till September 20.

On Monday, the Cauvery supervisory committee in Delhi had ordered Karnataka to release 3,000 cusecs water per day to Tamil Nadu between September 21 and September 30.

With Mettur Dam witnessing steady inflows following Karnataka's release of water from the Cauvery river, chief minister Jayalalithaa had, on September 16, ordered opening its sluice gates for irrigating samba crops in delta districts.

She had said the decision to release water was based on factors like the dam touching 84.76 feet (capacity 120 feet) and likelihood of receiving more water from Karnataka reservoirs in view of the apex court order and an anticipated normal northeast monsoon.

In August, Jayalalithaa had announced a Rs 64 crore special plan for farmers of delta districts to take up samba cultivation, and this included subsidy for various farm activities such as procurement of quality seeds, mechanised sowing and planting operations.

‘Our effort is for multiple usage of tractors’



With bumper paddy crop expected this kharif season, the tractor manufacturing companies are expecting to see the boost in sales by at least 15%, as compared to yearly average sales, after a lean patch of two years when four crops were damaged. Last year 23,000 tractors were sold in rural Punjab and this year manufacturers are expecting the joint sales to touch 26,500.

In the light of a study conducted by Punjab agriculture department that says the state's agrarian economy is over dependent on tractors, with their number increasing with falling number of acres in a family, and tractors are utilised for work just 396 hours in a year, Viren Popli, chief operating officer of Mahindra and Mahindra, Swaraj division, spoke to HT. Excerpts from an interview:

The farmers in Punjab have more number of tractors than required. Your views on this?

Punjab's agrarian economy is largely based on wheat and paddy crops, which are labour intensive, for 15 days to a month the crop has to be harvested, sorted and taken to mandis. With MNERGA scheme offering assured work to the labour, state faces labour shortage so dependence is on mechanised farming and tractor is a pivot for all the machines and implements used in agriculture. One can't reject the role of tractors in the green revolution. Also it gives a sense of security and is a status symbol.

How do you plan to make your tractors more saleable?

I think farmers need better equipped tractors with more implements. Our challenge is also to bring more implements that make farming mechanised and easy. We are making our

machines compatible to rotavators, cultivators, and other implements, powerful to pull loaded trolleys and also make them useable in running tube wells. Also with changing times we are coming up with devices and machines that help in precision farming.

What are the challenges a tractor manufacturer faces?

Our efforts to sell tractors are questioned. Yet I think the penetration of the machine is very low. Punjab comprises 10% market, in 2013-14, 6 lakh tractors were sold in the country but sales came down to 4.93 lakh the next year. Our challenge is to increase the utility of a tractor bought by a farmer and make it stronger and robust. Life of a tractor is 5 to 7 years, but farmers use it for much longer time.

Agricultural experts recommend cooperative usage of tractors and implements to cut down input cost. How are you helping the farmers?

We are launching Tringo scheme in Karnataka initially, in which we have spared 40 tractors to be offered to farmers along with operators. The farmers can fix appointment for a tractor, get his works done and very nominal charges would be taken from him. We will expand the scheme to other parts of the country.



With fresh spell of rains, kharif sowing improves to near 100% in Gujarat

Ahmedabad, September 19:

Fresh spell of rains over the parts of Gujarat has helped lift kharif sowing in the state to near 100 per cent as on September 19. The state has received good rains in parts of Saurashtra, south Gujarat and Central Gujarat over the past few days. However, the Long Period Average (LPA) rainfall deficit continues to be close to 22 per cent as on Monday.

The state agriculture department data showed kharif sowing in the state covering an area of 85,94,600 hectares as on September 19, about 99.11 per cent of the normal sowing of 86,71,500 hectares.

While pulses remained the preferred crop with overall sowing going up by close to 65 per cent of the normal, that of cotton remained subdued with nearly 15 per cent decline over normal.

The State government data puts overall pulses sowing at 7,31,700 hectares, of which urad witnessed sharpest growth of 170 per cent to 200,000 hectares as against the normal 74,200 hectares. The largest kharif crop of the region, cotton recorded 24,04,900 hectares of sowing, which is 15 per cent lower than normal 28,21,000 hectares.

The area of second largest kharif crop — groundnut was up by close to 18 per cent to 16,43,500 hectares as against the normal 13,93,800 hectares.

Other important crops such as castor and guar seed witnessed decline in sowing area by about 22 per cent and 41 per cent respectively.

The State has received total rainfall of 623.12 mm, which is about 22 per cent deficit from the LPA of 797 mm.

10,246 farmers received farm loan waiver, says Minister



A total of 10,246 small and marginal farmers in Virudhunagar district were benefited to the tune of Rs. 43.07 crore by way of waiver of crop loan announced by Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.

Minister for Dairy Development K.T. Rajenthra Bhalaji distributed the 'no due' certificate to the farmers who had availed themselves of loans from cooperative societies in the district, on Monday.

Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said Ms. Jayalalithaa had been implementing several schemes to protect the interests of the farmers.

She had promised to waive the short-term and mid-term farm loans during the Assembly election and now she had fulfilled it.

Mr. Bhalaji said that the government had initiated action to provide fresh farm loans to the beneficiaries of the loan waiver scheme, he said.

MLAs, G.S. Subramanian (Sattur, Chandra Prabha (Srivilliputtur), District Revenue Officer, C. Muthukumaran, Joint Registrar of Cooperatives, Arokkia Sugumar, Joint Registrar and Managing Director, Uma Maheswari, were among those who were present.

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Bayer launches fungicide for grapes

Bayer India's crop science division has launched fungicide Luna Experience for grapes to help fruit growers achieve healthy and disease-free produce that lasts longer on shelf.

Table grape is a high profit crop for growers, but its production is quite challenging on account of plant diseases, sustainable use of crop protection products, food safety issues related to residues of chemicals (MRLs) and dynamic international market requirements of retail chains. Plant diseases in particular can severely affect the quality of grapes, thus impacting the business of growers, exporters and fresh fruit retailers.

Bayer's new fungicide product will help grape growers increase the marketability of their produce due to the benefit of its Extended Grape Health, which refers to the superior protection provided by Luna against crop quality related diseases like Powdery Mildew as well as latent diseases. Latent infections remain in a dormant stage in the berry and start showing disease symptoms only after harvest, thus affecting the shelf-life.

Luna Experience is widely used for table grapes in several countries and has seen huge commercial success in South Africa, Italy, the USA and Chile. In India, Luna Experience is being introduced with label claims on Powdery Mildew and Anthracnose for grapes. The product will be sold in pack sizes of 1 litre, 250 ml and 100 ml.

Peter Mueller, head of South Asia, Bayer Crop Science Division, said, "Luna Experience will fulfill the need of Indian farmers for a revolutionary, new molecule for Powdery Mildew Management in grapes. With Luna, grape growers can achieve excellent harvest quality, while minimising post-harvest losses. Moreover, Luna will also benefit grape exporters as it will maintain the health and freshness of grapes for a longer time by protecting against latent diseases. Ultimately, end-consumers will benefit from a large variety of high-quality fresh produce."

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) indicates that about 33 percent of global food production is lost or wasted annually. According to industry reports, the world produces nearly 1.5 billion metric tonnes of fruits and vegetables, of which 800 million metric tonnes are vegetables and nearly 700 million metric tonnes are fruits. The production and consumption of fruits and vegetables is essential for the country. Therefore by reducing waste, one can increase efficiency for the food industry and avoid the loss of resources. Bayer aims to support the food industry by providing extended shelf-life to fruits and vegetables, and at the same time maintaining the freshness, taste and health quality of the harvest.

Sufficient fertiliser, seeds to meet rabi demand: Govt



As farmers prepare for sowing of rabi crops like wheat, from next month, the government on Monday reassured them saying there is adequate supply of agri-inputs, especially fertilisers and seeds, to meet demand.

Sowing of rabi crops begins from October and the harvesting from April. Wheat is the main rabi crop, while maize, millets, pulses and oilseeds are also grown.

Government is targeting wheat production of 96.50 million tonnes in 2016-17 rabi season, while pulses at 13.50 million tonnes.

"There won't be any shortage of agri-inputs like fertilisers and seeds in the rabi season. The supply is sufficient," a senior Agriculture Ministry official said.

The state governments have been asked to keep all agri-inputs ready and take steps to conserve moisture to promote timely sowing of rabi crops, the official added.

According to the ministry's data, the availability of urea is estimated to be 166.22 lakh tonnes in the rabi season of the 2016-17 crop year (July-June), as against the requirement of 166.20 lakh tonnes for the same period.

Similarly, the supply of Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP) is estimated to be 52.45 lakh tonnes, much higher than the requirement of 51.41 lakh tonnes.

Even the supply of Muriate of Potash (MoP), NPK and Single Superphosphate (SSP) are estimated to be 18.50 lakh tonnes, 53.70 lakh tonnes, and 33.57 lakh tonnes respectively during the ensuing rabi season.

In case of seeds, the official said except for some pulses, there is no shortage of seeds of other rabi crops.

The availability of wheat seeds is estimated to be 136.5 lakh quintals during the rabi season, much higher than the requirement of 117.5 lakh quintals

The supply of jowar seeds would be 1.25 lakh quintals against the requirement of 1.21 lakh quintals, while chickpea seeds supply would be lower at 16 lakh quintals as against 17.6 lakh quintals and even supply of urad seeds is estimated to be lower at 1.03 lakh quintals as compared to the requirement of 1.08 lakh quintals in the said period.

The official said that the state governments have been asked to promote seed production during the off-season to make up the deficit. They have also been asked to enforce seed certification standards.

Rs 11,500 crore crop loans disbursed in Telangana this season



Banks in Telangana have extended crop loans of Rs 11,500 crore to date against the annual target of Rs 17,460 crore for kharif season, according to the State Bank of Hyderabad.

SBH is a lead banker for State Level Bankers Committee (SLBC).

State Finance Minister E Rajendar who attended a meeting of SLBC here today requested the banks to complete the targeted lending for Kharif by the end of September, a press release from SBH said.

Banks have disbursed Rs 6,552.83 crore to 'Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises' segment during the quarter ended June 2016, and Rs 4,171 crore to the persons under weaker section category, Rs 1152.23 crore under SCs/STs category and Rs 670.98 crore to the minorities, it said.

Banks in the state have so far opened 79,86,408 accounts under PMJDY and covered 54,50,306 beneficiaries under Pradhan Manthri Suraksha Beema Yojana (PMSBY) and 16,84,903 beneficiaries under Pradhan Manthri Jeevan Jyoti Beema Yojna (PMJJBY).

So far, 526 claims under PMSBY and 2,963 claims under PMJJBY have been settled by insurance companies in the state, it added.