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# DECCAN Chronicle

## Mafia jacks up sand price with its 'loading charges'

Nexus between mafia, police and vigilance sleuths alleged.



As per norms, only 17 tonnes of sand can be transported in a 10-tyred truck and 22 tonnes in 12-tyred vehicle.

**Visakhapatnam:** Sand mafia is ruling the roost in the north coastal AP districts at the behest of an influential minister of the region, who is a 'loud mouth' in the state assembly. Even though the government has decided to supply sand free of cost, the sand mafia has been collecting Rs 7,000 to Rs 10, 000 for a truckload of sand in the guise of 'loading charges' at the ramps.

Hundreds of trucks are loaded with sand along the Vamsadhara and Nagavali sand reaches in Srikakulam district. The sand, that's otherwise available free of cost with nominal transportation charges, is being sold at Rs 25,000 per truck.

Due to non availability of quality sand in the reaches in Vizag, people and builders are forced to bring sand from ramps in Srikakulam district, which is costing them double the rate. "If we get the sand loaded by our labourers, it just costs between Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500, but we are not allowed to do so. We are forced to hire those who are available at the ramps, shelling out at least Rs 8,000.

Sometimes, it goes up to Rs 10,000. After adding the fuel charges and other costs, we are forced to sell a truckload at exorbitant price. This exorbitant price is even after we add a little over Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 as margin. And, in a day, we can't make more than two trips," said a sand transporter, requesting anonymity due to fear of the sand mafia.

A few days ago, builders representing the confederation of real estate developers' associations of India (CREDAI) had also cried foul about the hefty price at which sand is being sold, and threatened to stop construction activity.

CREDAI Visakhapatnam chapter chairman K. Ramakrishna Rao said that due to the games being played by unscrupulous middlemen, in connivance with field-level officials, the decision of the government to supply sand free of cost was being scuttled and there was a severe shortage of sand again.

“If we refuse to load sand from the government-identified ramps, fearful of the excessive loading charges, and do it from smaller ramps, cases are being booked against us. We don't know whom to approach with a complaint. We don't know any other work other than this even if we want to shift the job. The moment we leave the other ramp with the sand load, information from the mafia goes to the police and vigilance sleuths. This is the kind of harassment we face. This is nothing but an organised loot,” said another sand transporter.

### **Nano tech to cut diagnosis costs of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases**

According to IISc scientist professor Ajay Kumar Sood the biosensors will sense glucose, glycolated hemoglobin and C-reactive protein.



**Tirupati:** Scientists of Bengaluru-based Indian Institute of Science (IISc) has developed a nanotechnology platform, which can bring the cost of diagnosing diabetes and cardiovascular diseases.

The platform will allow the creation of portable diagnostic kits which will have biosensors — created using fibre optics and nano materials. According to IISc scientist professor Ajay Kumar Sood the biosensors will sense glucose, glycolated hemoglobin and C-reactive protein.

“The technology has to be taken to field trials and is highly accurate in the labs. There are similar foreign technologies that have hit the market recently,” he said.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 104th Indian Science Congress here on Wednesday, Prof. Sood said, “Graphene oxide — a nano material — is used in this technology.

These are the most sensitive detectors that they sense one nanomolar to a nano molecule.”

The bio sensor platform, which uses etched Fibre Bragg Grating, has high speed connectivity and detects glucose. The Fiber Bragg Grating looks like a cylindrical tube coated with graphene oxide and antibodies for detecting the protein. A change in reflected wavelength will be calculated to understand the concentrations.

He said, “Recent years there has been an unprecedented excitement in the scientific community related to one and two dimensional forms of carbon, namely, nanotubes and grapheme. These nano forms of carbon and other 2D nanomaterials have not only have fascinating physical properties from the basic science point of view but has an application value. We conducted recently optical experiments on the 2D Nanosystem.”

### **Keep detox drinks handy**

You can take your detox water wherever you go and sip all day as a delicious hydrating treat.



Losing weight-and keeping the pounds off isn't a quick or easy process, but a few simple diet tricks can be a big help along the way.

Detox water is one of the most popular tools for weight loss to come up in a long time, and the reason cannot be underestimated. Not only can you drink detox water to lose weight, it also tastes delicious and helps flush your body of toxins, boost energy, and reduces inflammation. You can take your detox water wherever you go and sip all day as a delicious hydrating treat. Here we present you a couple of recipes

### **Apple- Cinnamon Detox drink**

1 Apple thinly sliced, 1 Cinnamon Stick. Drop ingredients in the bottom of a pitcher. Cover with ice about 1/2 way through then fill to top with water. Place in the fridge for an hour before serving. You can refill the container 2-3 times before it begins to lose flavour.

### **Cool Ginger Mint Detox drink**

1 cucumber, sliced thin, 2 inches fresh, peeled ginger root, 2 lemon wedges, 10-12 mint leaves and a pinch of Himalayan Salt. Repeat the procedure as mentioned before.

### **Comfort delicacies**

Any vegetable that takes time to grow, and in which the edible part grows beneath the surface of the ground is usually warming.



In winters, our body craves for rich food which provides warmth along with nourishment. Any vegetable that takes time to grow, and in which the edible part grows beneath the surface of the ground is usually warming. Dry fruits, nuts and oilseeds are also warming. Here are a few delicious recipes from various parts of India popular during winters.

### **Keema Matar DoPyaza**

#### **Ingredients**

- 1 kg mince mutton/keema
- 250 gm fresh green peas
- 4 big onions, finely sliced
- 2 onions, quartered and layered
- 5-7 green chillies, split
- 2 tbsp.garlic paste
- 1 tbsp ginger paste
- A bunch of coriander, chopped
- 1 tsp turmeric powder
- ½ tsp cumin seeds

- 1 tsp. coriander powder
- 1 tsp garam masala
- ½ cup plain curd, beaten
- 100 gm ghee or cooking oil
- Salt to taste

#### Method

Heat ghee/oil in a large heavy bottom pot, add cumin seeds, let it splutter, then add sliced onions and sauté until they start changing the colour. Now add ginger-garlic paste and sauté for a few more seconds and add mince meat, little salt and beaten curd. Stir well. Sauté for 4-5 minutes on high flame, the curd and salt will help release the water, then reduce the flame to medium low and cook till the water is evaporated.

Now add all the dry masalas except garam masala. Add 1½ cups of water in the mixture. Bring it to a boil and add green peas, green chillies and quartered onion layers. Cook on low flame until the liquid is evaporated, the meat is tender and the texture is nice thick and creamy. Add chopped coriander and mix well. Garnish with coriander and serve hot with bread of your choice.

### **Makke ki Roti**

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups makki ka atta (maize flour)
- ¼ cup whole wheat flour (atta)
- ½ cup onions, chopped
- ¼ cup coriander, chopped
- 2 green chillies, chopped
- Salt to taste
- Ghee/Unsalted butter as required

#### Method

- Take makki ka aata, whole-wheat flour in a mixing bowl. Add chopped onions, coriander, chillies and salt. Mix well. Knead to make a medium soft dough using warm water. Cover and let it rest for few minutes.

- Divide into equal portions and shape into balls. Pat each ball between dampened palms to make a roti of medium thickness or roll out each ball between the folds of a greased plastic sheet. Remember unlike normal dough this will be quite crumbly so be careful while rolling and putting it on tawa.
- Cook the roti on tawa till one side is half-done. Turnover and spread some ghee/butter over the surface. Cook till both sides are golden brown.
- Serve hot with white butter.

### **Maa Chole Ke Dal**

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup white urad dal
- ½ cup chana dal
- ½ tsp turmeric powder
- Salt to taste
- 4 cups of water
- 1 tsp ginger, finely chopped
- 2 onions, finely chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, finely chopped
- ½ tsp cumin powder
- 1 tsp coriander powder
- 1 tsp red chili powder
- ½ tsp garam masala
- 1 tsp mango powder
- 3 tbsp ghee/oil

#### Method

- Wash both urad and chana dal and then soak dal in four cups of water for 15 to 20 minutes. Heat four cups of water in a pressure cooker with turmeric

powder, salt and some oil. Cook the dal approximately for 15 minutes on low flame. After that switch off the fire.

- Heat ghee/oil in a kadhai, add ginger, onions and sauté for a few minutes, now add chopped tomatoes, very little water, all the dry masalas, mix well, cover and cook for a couple of minutes on medium-high flame. Add cooked dal to this tadka and let it come to a boil. Now add garam masala and cook on simmer till you get the required consistency.

### **Shufta (a very rich and delicious recipe from the royal cuisine of Kashmir)**

#### Ingredients

- 1 cup paneer, diced
- ½ cup dry coconut, sliced
- ½ cup almonds, blanched
- ½ cup Pistachio, blanched
- ½ cup cashew
- ½ cup apricots
- ½ cup dates
- ½ cup walnuts
- ½ cup raisins
- 1 tsp dry ginger powder
- ½ tsp pepper powder
- ½ tsp cardamom powder
- ½ tsp cinnamon powder
- 2 cups sugar
- ¼ tsp kesar
- ½ cup ghee
- ½ cup dry rose petals

## Method

- Soak dry dates for an hour in water, remove seeds and chop into small dices. Wash apricots, blanch for 30 minutes, after cooling remove seeds and chop into small dices (you can use readily available apricots). Chop all the dry fruits into small pieces and soak in warm water for at least an hour or two. Heat the ghee in a pan and fry paneer cubes till golden brown in colour. Keep by tossing so that it gets even color. Once done, remove and keep them aside.
- Now fry the sliced dry coconut in the same ghee. Add little water, sugar, presoaked nuts with the water in which they were soaked, add fried paneer cubes, kesar and all the spices cook on low-medium flame. Keep stirring till the syrup thickens and coats all the ingredients. Garnish with grated coconut or dried rose petals and serve hot.

## Winter Delights

Winters are associated with making the best of staying indoors. Ovens and stoves being more active in winters are an idea keeping in focus on inner warmth, and thus the season is associated with celebrating the warmth of eating.

Amplified hunger pangs during winters can be explained by the body metabolism working to generate enough energy in the form of heat to keep you comfortable. Certain dietary practices can ensure your body handles the cold well and ensure a healthy state of being. A few examples are:

### Warming foods

Vegetables that grow with edible part beneath the surface of the ground like carrots make excellent winter choices. Food like meat and fish are warming too, and provide much-needed energy to keep one warm.

### Compacted Foods

Denser foods make good choices during this season. Dried beans and lentils would fit into this category. Sunflower seeds and sesame seeds are other great examples of nutritiously compacted winter foods.

### Fresh and Dried Fruits

Fruits that provide warmth include papaya and pineapple. Consuming amla is a good choice as well. Dates are magic winter food — alongside providing fibre, iron, magnesium, calcium and vitamins (C and B3), they also provide an energy boost.



### Spices:

Liberal usage of ajwain, black peppers, mustard, hing, and suva is recommended. Most of these are valuable remedies for winter coughs. Methi aids with bone and joint problems that show up in this season. And let's not forget the healing capabilities of haldi. Grandmothers know best, after all.

# THE HINDU

### Water for Anantapur from Handri Neeva: CM



ANANTAPUR: Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu said on Wednesday that the government planned to fill all 1,260 tanks in Anantapur district with water from the Handri Neeva Sujala Sravanthi (HNSS) project.

Speaking at a public meeting marking the progress of the 'Janmabhoomi – Maa Vooru' programme at the Bukkapatnam mandal headquarters village in Anantapur district, he appealed to people to cooperate in making his dream of filling up the tanks in the district and 'changing the course' of the district from being a drought-prone one to a prosperous one.

"I have just seen the Bukkapatnam tank. It is filled [with] 'Karra Tumma' (Telugu name for the weed *Prosopis Juliflora*). Palle Raghunatha Reddy told me that it would cost about Rs.3.5 crore to get water to this tank from the HNSS canal passing close by. I will give you as much as required; enable the tank to hold 0.7 or 0.8 tmc of water to serve the Bukkapatnam, Kothacheruvu and Puttaparthi mandals by it," said Mr. Naidu.

### Ring road

He would sanction a ring road connecting the Bukkapatnam and Kothacheruvu mandal headquarters villages with Puttaparthi via the Puttaparthi airport.

“I was criticised by people, inexperienced people, for accepting the special package (in place of special status). It takes but a minute to fight. We would have ended up just fighting and developing. My political acumen in accepting the special package has today meant that the Polavaram project – future lifeline for the State – was given national project status and funds were also released,” said Mr. Naidu, even as he urged the people to re-elect the current government which was working for their welfare.

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### **Agriculture action force soon: Minister**

Minister for Agriculture V.S. Sunil Kumar has said that the decline in agriculture combined with climate change is edging the State towards a crisis.

Opening Urvaram- 2017, a three-day district-level farmers’ meet at Koottalida here on Monday, he said an agriculture action force would be formed in 500 panchayats with a State-level nodal officer to monitor them.

“Kerala required 40 lakh tonnes of rice a year, but the State produces only 5.5 lakh tonnes. The production of fruits, vegetables and lentils too is low,” he said.

Mr. Sunil Kumar blamed those who filled paddy fields and wetlands for their selfish needs. The arrogance of the people in Kerala that they could buy anything if they had money was the reason for the Malayali society turning into an unhealthy one so fast, he said.

The Minister said the State government was making a data bank of barren lands in each panchayat to promote farming. "Agriculture has to become a profitable enterprise. The government is doing whatever is possible to ensure best prices for the farmers," he said.


### Coconut processing unit

The Minister said the State government was planning to set up a coconut processing unit in Kozhikode district very soon with active participation of farmers' cooperative societies.

He urged the officials of the department to work towards making the Haritha Keralam project a success

Purushan Kadalundi, MLA, presided over the meeting while Transport Minister A.K. Saseendran gave away the prizes to officials who performed well in the previous year. District panchayat president Babu Parasseri opened a seminar.

### Note ban hits paddy cultivation

| <b>IN DOLDRUMS</b>  |                              |  |   |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|
|  |                              | SRSP, Sripada Yellampalli Project, Upper Manair and Lower Manair projects get good inflows |   |
| Normal rainfall   | Karimnagar district received | Area of cultivation of paddy recorded  | Only <b>15 to 20 per cent</b> plantation of paddy nurseries taken up in majority of villages due to cash crunch |
| <b>823.1 mm</b>   | <b>922.3 mm</b>              | only <b>8,902 hectares</b> against the normal area of <b>54,827 hectares</b>               |   |

### *Despite abundant, water farmers couldn't take up plantation of nurseries in Karimnagar district*

There was abundant rainfall and all irrigation projects including major, medium and minor were filled to the brim. Besides, the groundwater table was also recharged considerably. Yet, the farmers were unable to take up cultivation this rabi and the reason cited was the cash crunch following demonetisation.

The farmers of the district, who were reeling under acute drought conditions for the last few years, heaved a sigh of relief with the arrival of good monsoon in the khariff

season. They had good yield for crops such as maize, cotton and paddy and secured money from traders which was credited into their bank accounts.

However, with the demonetisation there was a cash crunch in various banks in the rural areas and the farmers were unable to withdraw cash due to the norms stipulated by the government. Despite a long wait at the bank they could manage to get cash ranging from Rs 2,000 to Rs 4,000 per day.

The farmers who expected a bumper harvest following good monsoon, sowed paddy nurseries for cultivating. But, due to shortage of cash, they were unable to take up plantation of paddy nurseries as they were not in a position to pay wages to the labourers.

According to statistics available with the Agriculture Department, paddy was cultivated only in 8,902 hectares against normal area of cultivation in 54,827 hectares in bifurcated Karimnagar district.

A farmer Prabhakar Rao from Vemulawada mandal said that the money earned by selling the khariff crop was deposited in the banks and they were unable to withdraw as per the requirement to take up rabi season following the restrictions and cash crunch. “The cultivation of paddy had come down drastically in all villages in spite of availability of water sources and nine hours of free power. The traders are not giving the fertilizer on credit”, he complained.

### **Plan to convert mandis into e-markets cleared**



In a bid to modernise trade and business in the Capital, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government on Tuesday decided to facilitate the conversion of existing *mandis* into *e-mandis*.

A proposal has also been approved to construct an e-mandi at Tikri Khampur in west Delhi at a cost of ₹ 800 crore within two-and-a-half years.

## **Review meeting**

Development Minister Gopal Rai announced the steps following a review meeting with the Delhi Agricultural Marketing Board (DAMB).

The budget passed by the board for 2017-18 stood at ₹ 371.18 crore for the estimated income while the expenditure proposed was ₹ 434.19 crore.

“Our main objective is to usher in more transparency and accountability in this business. We also want to ensure that farmers get fair value for their goods,” the Minister said. Taking note of “demonetisation blues”, Mr. Rai added that the Delhi government had installed 38 POS machines in *mandis* to reduce hardships faced by traders and customers.

The conversion of the *mandis*, the Minister said, was being done in collaboration with the NAM Group.

## **New market**

The new *mandi*, the government said, will be developed over an area of 70 acres and will be equipped with modern facilities.

A special consultant will also be roped in to facilitate the conversion of the Azadpur *mandi* to relieve congestion. Changes are also in the offing for the Ghazipur *mandi* where a four-storey building with modern facilities is being constructed.

The flower market at Ghazipur will also be modernised. The budget allocated for this makeover is ₹ 140 crore, said a senior government official. The market will feature 432 shops with cold storage facilities

## **More revamps**

A three-storey building will be constructed at the poultry market in Ghazipur at a cost of ₹ 120 crore. The Mongolpuri fodder market is set to be replaced by a *sabzi mandi* soon, added the official.

The Azadpur cement warehouse area will also see some changes with the reconstruction of three sheds and an upgrade of the existing drainage system at a cost of ₹ 20 crore.

## **Village-level assessment of drought**

MADURAI: The district administration has initiated a village-level study to assess the impact of failure in crops due to inadequate rainfall.

Collector K. Veera Raghava Rao said teams comprising Village Administrative Officers, Agriculture Officers and revenue staff had been formed to conduct the study.

“Initially, we will shortlist a sample of around 10 per cent of the villages, which will be studied to get a broader idea of the impact. Later, the study will be expanded to all the villages,” he said.

Officials said since the State Government had decided to send committees to every district to study the drought situation, this prior assessment by the district would help in projecting the impact properly to the government.

### **More than ₹ 15-cr Rythu Bandhu loans given**

#### ***Loans advanced to farmers with zero interest payment for 180 days to prevent distress sale of crop***

HYDERABAD: The State Government has given loans to the tune of ₹ 15 crore to 1,024 farmers under Rythu Bandhu scheme up to December this financial year.

Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao who replied to a query in the Legislative Council on behalf of the Agriculture Minister on Wednesday said the quantum of loans to farmers under the scheme was on the rise since the formation of Telangana State. This was evident from the fact that ₹ 10.24 crore had been given to 857 farmers in 2014-15 and ₹ 11 crore to 954 farmers during the year 2015-16.

The Government has enhanced the loan amount to ₹ 2 lakh against ₹ 1 lakh as part of Rythu Bandhu. A maximum amount of ₹ 2 lakh or 75 per cent of the pledged stock whichever was less was being sanctioned as loan without mortgage of land. The loans were being sanctioned without interest for 180 days to prevent farmers from resorting to distress sale.

#### **Prevent distress sale**

The measure was initiated as farmers were resorting to distress sale when the prices were low. “Middlemen were hitherto selling grain at higher prices after obtaining it at a lower price from farmers. We have taken steps in the form of grant of loans without interest for six months to prevent distress sale by farmers,” he said.

Congress member Ponguleti Sudhakar Reddy lamented that sowing in rabi had come down significantly because of demonetisation. announced by the Centre. The Government should come to the rescue of farmers by extending interest free loans and this would also enable the Government achieve the targets set for rabi cultivation during the current year which witnessed good rainfall.

TRS member Palla Rajeshwar Reddy urged the Government to launch a campaign about rythu bandhu scheme as many farmers were still not availing the facility provided by the Government. Mr. Harish Rao said the Government had taken up construction of godowns was taken up for storing agricultural produce so that farmers could avail the benefits under the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

# Business Standard

## **Basmati exporters' scripts rise on high shipment, price outlook**

More exports are forecast this year, as Iran is expected to restart its import after two years

A better outlook for export and price realisation has stocked bullish sentiment in the shares of basmati rice marketing companies over the past fortnight. These share prices have risen by nine to 14 per cent in this period. More exports are forecast this year, as Iran, the largest buyer of aromatic rice from India, is expected to restart its import after two years. Experts also say the price realisation per tonne, down after FY14, is likely to improve. "Iran was a major buyer until a few years ago.

## **Weak data indicate delay in consumption recovery**

December PMI is at 49.6, the worst decline in manufacturing since Nov 2008

Some high-speed data from post-demonetisation has started coming in. The December manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) indicates contraction. Automobile numbers show drastic falls. Crop sowing data and core industry data (from November) also shows slowdown. The November manufacturing PMI was at 52.3 (above /below 50 signals expansion/ contraction), which was much lower than the October PMI of 55.4 but still positive. The December PMI is at 49.6, which means contraction. It's the worst decline in manufacturing since November 2008.

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## **Compensation raised for farmers near Mumbai- Nagpur highway project**



MUMBAI: Following resistance from farmers to give away their land for the construction of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis's pet project the Mumbai- Nagpur super communications highway project, the state government has decided to increase the compensation to be given by 50% to sweeten the deal.

Besides that, a new category of farm land has also been added in the compensation list.

Earlier in June, when the government had announced that they will be adopting the land pooling model to acquire land for this Rs 46,000 crore project, they had said also announced compensation to be given for land depending on its crop pattern and irrigation facilities.

The government will now give Rs 75,000 per hectare for non irrigated land and, the amount was Rs 50,000 previously. Rs 1.50 lakh will be given for irrigated land, the amount was Rs 1 lakh previously. A new category of seasonal irrigated land has been created and Rs 1.12 lakh will be given for such land per hectare. This compensation will be given for 10 years and will increase by 10% every year.

The state government was finding it hard to acquire land as farmers were protesting against the project. The project is more than 700 kms long and requires 20,820 hectares of land which is spread through 344 villages for this project, most of which is agriculture land. So far less than 5000 hectare of land has been acquired.

"A cabinet sub Committee under Fadnavis was formed to review the compensation package and also make changes after speaking to the farmers. The new compensation will hopefully end the resistance," said a senior official.

MSRDC which is the implementing agency has called for global bids for the project, which also aims at creating 28 nodal townships enroute. This road also claims to reduce the traveling time from Nagpur to Mumbai to 9-10 hours.

"Its a huge increase in the compensation that will get almost a life-long benefits to the PAPs and their family members by investing their land in the project. Also they will not have to put labour," he added

### **Haryana to get database of progressive farmers**

CHANDIGARH: The Haryana government has decided to prepare a database of progressive farmers in all districts of the state. Besides, 340 villages have been identified for development as horticultural villages to promote horticulture in the state.

Haryana State Horticulture Development Agency chairman Abhilaksh Likhi said that an action plan for these villages has been prepared and the scheme would be implemented in a phased manner.

Under the scheme, 140 clusters with up to five villages have been created.

Budget provision of Rs 510 crore has been made for development of infrastructure and provision of facilities such as cold storage, grading, packaging, solar systems, mobile vans and marketing.





He said that with a view to achieve the target of doubling the income of farmers as per Vision 2022 of Haryana Government, IT platform should be provided to farmers so that they may have immediate access to information regarding works being undertaken by various institutions in their interests.



### **Maharashtra govt plans to restart closed mills**

It is expected that cane area for the next season will be around 10 lakh hectare.



This year, 32 mills have not commenced crushing due to paucity of cane, among other issues.

In anticipation of increased cane area for 2017-18, the state government plans to take steps to restart the sugar mills that have ceased operations. State Cooperation Minister Subhash Deshmukh announced the decision, adding that the government will extend “all necessary help” to speed up the process.

Deshmukh, speaking to The Indian Express, said the decision was taken to avoid collection of unharvested cane in the fields. Due to the drought last year, cane area across Maharashtra had seen a sharp dip with only 6.33 lakh hectares of farm land reporting cultivation. Good monsoons and successful water retention schemes under the “Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyaan” in various parts of the state will see an increase in cane area for the crushing season of 2017-18. It is expected that the cane area for the next season will be around 10 lakh hectare and a bumper crop of cane is expected.

“It has been observed that in many cases, due to shortage of mills, cane remains unharvested. To avoid this, non-operational mills in those areas will be restarted,” he said, adding that a preliminary survey to identify such mills has already started.

The state will explore all possible means to help interested parties in running the mills. “We are drawing up a detailed plan and will seek bidders for the mills,” he said. The state government is ready to bear the working capital, if needed. Defunct mills in Marathwada, Ahmednagar, Solapur, Pune districts are being checked for the purpose.

This year, 32 mills have not commenced crushing due to paucity of cane, among other issues.

The government’s decision comes at a time when the sugar sector in the state is reeling under cumulative effect of low prices and under-utilisation of their capacities. Several mills fear that their accounts with various banks will be deemed as a Non-performing asset (NPA) and it would be difficult to start operations next year. Estimates by the millers show that about 60 per cent of the mills might not be able to start operations.

A delegation of the millers, led by former Union Minister Sharad Pawar, had met Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitely on Tuesday to press for the restructuring of repayment of various loans levied on them. Deshmukh said the chief minister is likely to meet the finance minister to discuss the matter.

As of December 31, 82 per cent of fair and remunerative price (FRP) have been paid in the state. Around 100 of the 147 mills have in fact defaulted in their payment and officers of the sugar commissionerate are taking steps to increase the amount.

### **Haryana minister seeks central aid for sugarcane industry**

Captain Abhimanyu said all cooperative sugar mills in the state were incurring losses and have negative net worth.

Haryana Finance Minister Captain Abhimanyu has sought financial assistance from the Centre for the sugarcane industry while addressing concerns related to digital transactions and modifications in the crop insurance scheme.

Speaking at the pre-budget consultations held by Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitely in New Delhi on Wednesday, Abhimanyu on Friday said the state government was planning to emulate the Centre by presenting its budget on the basis of revenue and capital classification in February 2017.

He urged Jaitley to enhance the allocation, especially for development of infrastructural facilities in rural areas.

Captain Abhimanyu said all cooperative sugar mills in the state were incurring losses and have negative net worth.

The minister also requested the Centre to provide financial assistance in the form of interest-free loans or soft loans to set up ethanol and co-generation plants.

# hindustantimes

## Ken-Betwa linking project receives environment and forest clearances



A man walks over truck tire tracks on Ken's river bed. (Vipin Kumar/Hindustan Times)

The Centre's ambitious Ken-Betwa river linking project, which aims at addressing water needs of dry swathes in Madhya Pradesh and poll-bound Uttar Pradesh inter alia, has received environment, forest and tribal clearances, sources in Union Water Ministry said.

However, there was no official confirmation in this regard.

On the other hand, a booklet the Ministry released on Tuesday stated that the forest advisory committee of the ministry of environment and forest and climate change has considered the proposal for forest clearance during its meeting held on November 8 and "decided to have some additional information before giving clearance".

The environmental appraisal committee has "duly considered" and "agreed" for the project in its meeting held on December 30.

The ministry of tribal affairs has also agreed for the clearance of the project during a meeting held on Monday, the booklet reads.

The booklet, circulated at a briefing called by Union water resources minister Uma Bharti, also states that the clearances for the project are in a “very advanced stage” of completion and that the government will start implementing the national project as “model link” of inter-linking of river (ILR) programme.

“The phase I of the project, first ILR project, had received clearance from the Standing Committee of National Board of Wild Life in August last year... The remaining clearances, environment, forest and tribal clearances, too have been obtained, official communication regarding which though is awaited,” sources said.

“Obtaining the wildlife clearance was the most difficult clearance to get in connection with the project. I am thankful to the board for giving us the clearance...now we are pursuing NITI Ayog to change its funding pattern to 90:10 (Centre : state share) from 60:40 for the project given it is a special project,” Bharti said.

Work on the project cannot be launched until the funding pattern is finalised.

Phase I of the project, of linking Ken river in Madhya Pradesh and Betwa in Uttar Pradesh, at a cost of ₹9500 crore is envisaged to help irrigate an area of 6.35 lakh hectares annually.

Of this, 3.69 lakh hectares will be covered in Madhya Pradesh’s Chattarpur, Tikamgarh and Panna districts. The remaining 2.65 lakh hectares of area falls in Uttar Pradesh’s Mahoba, Banda and Jhansi districts.

The project is estimated to provide 49 million cubic metres of drinking water to a population of 13.42 lakh of people in Bundelkhand region in the two states. Besides, the project will also generate 78 mega watt of power.

Envisaged first in 1980 to transfer surplus river water Envisaged first in 1980 to transfer surplus river water to dry/arid areas, the river-linking the national perspective plan, under which Ken-Betwa river-linking project is taking shape, aims at creating additional irrigation potential of 35 million hectare and generation of 34000 mega watt of power.

Controlling flood, navigation, water supply, fisheries, salinity, drought mitigation and combating pollution are among the other stated objectives of the NPP, which gained momentum during the previous NDA regime led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Apart from the Ken-Betwa linking project, Par-Tapi-Narmada Link (to transfer water from surplus regions of Western Ghats to the dry areas of Kutch and Saurashtra and Damanganga-Pinjal link, which will provide water for the Greater Mumbai, are among the 30 such river links planned.