

Farmers on the brink in rain-hit Vidarbha

In Yavatmal district more than 60 per cent of the fields is water-logged

There is hardly any food left in her house. The floods claimed most of her belongings. Now without work for two months, 35-year-old Renuka Shende is worried. “Soon we will be left with only water to quell our hunger pangs,” fears the daily wage labourer from Bhimakund in Vidarbha’s Yavatmal district.

Renuka’s family is among the 100 households forced to flee their village after a devastating flood in June. Today, they are encroachers on government land, a hillock close to Bhimakund. The raging waters of the Painganga river had left the village water-logged for days. It’s the fifth flooding this year alone, leaving them with no home and no crops.

A grim picture, replicated across Maharashtra’s Vidarbha belt already infamous for the highest number of farmer suicides in the country. Over 150 people have been killed in the heavy rains this year, which caused most of the rivers to overflow. Across the belt, 20 per cent of the crop has been destroyed.

The epicentre of the crisis is Yavatmal district where more than 60 per cent of the fields is water-logged. Yavatmal has seen over 50 farmer suicides this year. A fifth of them in the month of August alone, estimates Vidarbha Jana Andolan Samiti (VJAS), the farmers advocacy group.

The wrecked fields drove cotton farmer Anil Bapurao Marope from Yavatmal’s Ghatanji tehsil to swallow poison in July.

“My husband sowed the field in the first week of June but our farm got water-logged in the flood. He had to sow again just 20 days later,” says his widow Radhabai Marope. Faced with a Rs. 45,000 debt which started spiralling, he ended his life. Radhabai now has to fend for herself and their four children.

Prem Rathod, a farmer from the same region, says almost every farmer has had to sow the same crop twice this season.

“Our fields are still water-logged. We will have to wait for a month or two before sowing again,” he says. In the neighbouring district of Wardha, some farmers have sown their crop more than three times in a span of two months.

Faced with growing unrest, the Maharashtra government announced a package of Rs.1934 crore for Vidarbha’s farmers weeks ago. The money, however, can be released only after the district administration estimates the damage done. The official survey is still incomplete. “We have completed 90 per cent of the survey and we hope to complete it by this month-end,” says Yavatmal Deputy Collector Rajendra Deshmukh.

Farmers’ groups have contested the survey saying it has drastically underestimated the damage.

In Washim, the official survey has estimated that 43,000 hectares of crop was destroyed. The VJAS argues that the figure is almost twice as high, at more than 80,000 hectares.

A reason why farmers are already cynical. “The government has not yet compensated us for the floods of 2006. We don’t expect the money this time. Even if it comes, it will be too

little,” says Narendra Reddy, village panchayat member of Arli village in Ghatanji tehsil where more than 500 acres of crop is still waterlogged.

Farmers’ clusters and collection centres to help them get better price

In an effort aimed at helping farmers get better price for their produce, the Horticulture Department here will establish collection centres in Thondamuthur and Pollachi, from where traders, vegetable vendors or bulk purchasers can purchase fruits and vegetables.

The centres will start functioning from September 1, says Satyabrata Sahoo, Commissioner of Horticulture and Plantation Crops, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Along with the two, the Department will establish 19 such centres in nine districts in the State. Attached to those collection centres will be farmers’ clusters. Farmers after producing vegetables and fruits will take those to the collection centres, gather inputs about prices prevailing at other centres and then command a good price under this ‘Peri-metro Project’. The sheer volume and quality of produce will help the farmers.

Mr. Sahoo says that the Department has planned the Project in such a way that the farmers run the entire programme. The farmers will also run the collection centres and at a later stage the retail outlets as well. The Department on its part will supply quality seeds and farm implements at a subsidised price, finance the purchase of vehicles to transport vegetables and fruits from farms to the collection centres and also provide the infrastructure necessary at the centres. “The Government’s job is to handhold the farmers until they manage the affairs.”

In Coimbatore, the Thondamuthur collection centre will function at the regulated market complex there. In Pollachi it will be at the Modipuram regulated market complex. The Thondamuthur centre will have the support of six farmers’ clusters. The vegetable cultivation in those clusters will be spread over 120 ha and the Department has estimated the production at 10 – 12 metric tonnes a day. Likewise, the Pollachi centre will have farmers from 15 clusters sending 15 – 17 metric tonnes a day. The cluster are spread over 188 ha. The Thondamuthur collection centre has a cold storage facility as well, says A. Ramakrishnan, Deputy Director, Horticulture, Coimbatore.

Once the centres start functioning and the farmers have a grip over the transactions, the Department plans to introduce an online platform for farmers and buyers to communicate with one another. This is the second leg of the ‘Peri-metro Project’.

“Affected ryots should be included in drought survey”

Combined efforts of the agriculture and revenue departments are a must during the drought survey so that not a single affected farmer is left out, said Agriculture Additional Secretary and District Monitoring Officer R. Vasuki.

Addressing a special meeting held here on Saturday, she said that village administrative officers and agriculture officials play a crucial role as they are closely associated with farmers and they can gauge the gravity of the drought.

All farmers affected by drought should be enrolled in the survey and the officials should assist the farmers in getting suitable compensation, she advised.

Establishing farm ponds should be completed before the north east monsoon sets in, as this would help farmers harvest maximum rain water to recharge irrigation wells and improve the ground water table.

A total of 2,600 farm ponds will be established in the district, she said and added that farmers could be motivated to rear fish in the farm pond to boost their income.

Urging each agriculture officer to create at least 40 ponds in their area, she said that MGNREGS workers should be utilised for digging farm pond.

Ms. Vasuki also advised the Dindigul municipality to complete the underground drainage works at the earliest in the interest of residents.

Direct purchase of jowar, ragi and wheat from farmers likely

Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies Dinesh Gundu Rao has said that the State government is contemplating purchasing jowar, ragi, wheat and paddy directly from farmers for distribution to beneficiaries under the Anna Bhagya scheme.

He was speaking to presspersons here on Sunday on the sidelines of a function organised to mark the death anniversary of the former Chief Minister R. Gundu Rao.

Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao said that the Cabinet had decided to give jowar, ragi, wheat and boiled rice depending on the regional requirements to beneficiaries apart from rice. "To meet the demand, we have to procure foodgrains from other States. Instead, the government is contemplating procuring these foodgrains from farmers in the State giving them minimum support price as it would help farmers directly," he said.

The Minister said that last year's minimum support price for jowar was Rs. 1,500 per quintal. The government was contemplating increasing minimum support price and procuring jowar from farmers at a higher price, he said.

Helpline

He said that a helpline centre set up to address grievances of the public and check irregularities in the public distribution system would become functional by September-end.

He said that apart from providing biometric systems at the PDS shops, it had been planned to computerise the warehouses. The Deputy Commissioner had been directed to monitor the stock and a vigilance squad would be made active, he said. Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao said that it had been observed that in some places the officials of his department were involved in misappropriation. He said that he would tour the State from September and take steps to check corruption in the department.

PDS commission

He said that the government would soon hike commission for those running PDS shops. Even wages given to headload workers would be increased from Rs. 6 per bag in September, he said.

Applications

Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao said that of the 22 lakh new applications for ration cards, 17 lakh applications were for BPL cards and the process of disposing them of would be completed in two months.

It would take another six months to identify bogus cards, he said.

He said that with the implementation of the Food Security Bill, State governments would be able to save Rs. 600 crore each and the Opposition parties should desist from opposing the Bill, he said.

Government contemplating minimum support price for these foodgrains: Minister

Compensate rain-affected farmers by Sept. 5: Gowda

At present a paltry sum is paid for crop loss under calamity relief fund

Leader of Opposition in Legislative Council and former Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda has urged the government to compensate farmers who have suffered loss due to heavy rainfall in Malnad and coastal Karnataka region by September 5.

At present, a paltry sum is paid as compensation for crop loss under calamity relief fund.

As the rain has caused extensive damage to arecanut, paddy, ginger, coffee, and maize crops this year, the government should release special compensation to farmers who have suffered loss, he said at a press conference in the city on Sunday.

He expressed displeasure against the survey conducted by officials of Agriculture, Horticulture and Revenue departments to assess the crop loss.

The actual loss suffered by farmers should be scientifically assessed.

The compensation should be paid even to the bagair hokum farmers as well, he said.

Arecanut plantations in Uttara Kannada, Udupi, Dakshina Kannada, Shimoga and Chikmagalur districts have been infected with the fruit-rot disease, also known as koleroga due to excess moisture.

The government should provide copper sulphate used to prevent koleroga free of cost to the farmers. The loan borrowed by arecanut growers should be waived off and cooperative societies should be directed to issue fresh loan to them.

A delegation of Bharatiya Janata Party leaders will meet Chief Minister Siddaramaiah soon and press him to provide compensation for crop loss at the earliest, he said. President of the BJP State unit Prahlad Joshi said party MPs from Karnataka would raise the issue of loss suffered by arecanut growers in the Parliament.

He slammed the State government's decision to continue with Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act, 1964.

Cow slaughter act

The BJP government had passed two legislations to prevent cow slaughter in the interests of farmers. President's assent was awaited for the legislation passed in 2010 while Governor's approval was awaited for another legislation passed in 2012. He alleged that Congress leaders were trying to appease Minorities by restoring the old law.

Mr. Joshi also opposed the State government's decision to dissolve the managing committees of 41 temples that come under the Muzrai Department. Members of these committees were appointed by following the existing procedures. The Congress government was pursuing vendetta politics by reversing the decisions taken by the previous BJP government.

The BJP would stage protests against the State government's decisions to continue with Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act, 1964, and abolition of managing committees of Muzrai temples, he said.

Ex-Deputy Chief Minister K.S. Eshwarappa, member of Rajya Sabha Ayanur Manjunath, and ex-ministers Kota Srinivasa Poojary and B. Nagaraja Shetty were present.

First step to farming at school

Thavakkara UP school uses its own vegetables for midday meal



The mid-day meal has turned tastier for the little ones at Thavakkara Government Upper Primary School. The dishes made out of long beans, drumsticks, papaya, yam, and okra are special, they say, as they themselves grew the crops in the school backyard.

The vegetable farming in the 15-cent land began in June this academic year as part of the 'Harithanidhi' project. The school eco club has produced a decent yield of many crops, which are used for the mid-day meal. Students from class five to seven had taken to farming with passion, said headmistress T.V. Rejitha. The students, supported by nine teaching staff and the office attendant, have grown colocasia and turmeric, the latter enough to meet their needs for one whole year.

Considering the students' growing interest in farming, it has been decided to divide vegetable cultivation between various classes. Students from class III would be initiated into practical sessions of farming, the headmistress said.

For many students who knew nothing about farming, the experience had been thrilling as well as rewarding. Once the nuances of vegetable farming were explained, some of them wanted to take up farming when they grew up, she said. Every day before school hours and during class intervals, they tend to the garden spread in small tracts of land in the school compound. And they are in no rush to return home, for they have an interesting vocation at school these days.

Women of Velukkara embrace paddy farming

Trendsetters: Women of Velukkara panchayat engaged in paddy cultivation.— Photo: By special arrangement

Twenty groups of women of Velukkara Panchayat of Thrissur have taken up paddy cultivation.

All of them are new to farming. They have equipped themselves with women-friendly agromachinery.

The groups are working under the Women Farmers' Society. Thomas Unniyadan, MLA, inaugurated the society at a function held recently by the Velukkara Krishi Bhavan, panchayat and the Kerala Agricultural University.

The women farmers own 22 machines, including paddy transplanters, cono-weeders, harvesters, sprayers, winnowers, threshers and brush cutters.

KAU Vice-Cancellor P. Rajendran hoped the women farmers of Velukkara would inspire women of other panchayats.



“The KAU has done extensive work to develop women-friendly farm implements. Women need farm implements that do not tire them out. Participation of women in agriculture should increase,” he said. The KAU Gender Studies Centre has been working for empowerment of women through agriculture.

It had worked in tandem with officials of local bodies and the Agriculture Department to help the women farmers of Velukkara. A trial-cum-demonstration of the Manual Paddy Transplanter (Cuttack Rice Research Institute model) was organised during 2012. The results of the trial, which included higher yield, motivated the women farmers. They were made aware of the benefits of mechanised farming. The Velukkara Panchayat had taken up a development project for women-friendly farm mechanisation in 2012-13 by procuring low-cost machines. P.S. Geethakutty, Head of the KAU Centre of Gender Studies, said a study revealed that involvement in the farm sector improved the lot of women in the panchayat. There are about 40 groups of women rice farmers in the panchayat, each group having five to six members. They are engaged in lease land farming. The study showed that the women needed about 71 working days (including 64 days of hard work) to cultivate rice in a one-acre field.

The Gender Studies Centre got the women trained with the support of the Agricultural Engineering Research and Training Centre of the College of Horticulture, Vellanikkara. The society has been set up in the second phase of the project. The society has formulated innovative guidelines, including participatory labour budgeting and a seasonal machine use calendar.

Farmers, co-op employees to protest against Bakshi panel report

Farmers leaders and cooperative sector employees on Sunday resolved to launch a relentless struggle against the alleged "anti-farmer" Prakash Bakshi Committee report on short-term Credit Cooperative Structure.

The leaders at a round-table conference organised by the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham and Primary Agriculture Cooperative Employees Union, opposed tooth and nail the Nabard circular which allegedly threatened the very existence of primary agriculture cooperative societies (PACS).

Setting the tone for an elaborate discussion on the report of the expert committee constituted by Reserve Bank of India under Nabard Chairman Prakash Bakshi, N.G. Ranga Kisan Samastha General Secretary Ch. Seshaiyah said that it was unfortunate that the Nabard had lost its original focus on promoting agriculture and rural development.

Protracted struggle

The recommendation allegedly aimed at diluting the role of the PACS would prove to be a death knell to the cooperative sector at the grassroots level, lamented APRS district secretary D. Gopinath.

CITU district president G. Srinivasulu opined that the cooperative employees should join hands with farmers for a protracted struggle against the Nabard circular as they would be thrown out of jobs over a period.

Farmers should be prepared for a 'militant struggle' felt CPI (ML) New Democracy leader K. Narasimham.

The PACS would not be able to sustain themselves by doing merely selling fertilizers to farmers as most private companies preferred to market the key farm input only through a network of private traders, argued former Tobacco Board member Ch. Ranga Rao.

The employees would not rest till the circular on implementing the panel report was withdrawn, asserted PACS Employees Union district secretary B. Venkata Rao and its district president N. Ramachandra Reddy.

Rythu Sangham leaders say the Nabard circular threatens the existence of the PACS

‘A million cockroaches flee China farm’



At least one million cockroaches have escaped a farm in China where they were being bred for use in traditional medicine, a report said. The cockroaches fled the facility in Dafeng, in the eastern province of Jiangsu, for surrounding cornfields earlier this month after an “unknown perpetrator” destroyed the plastic greenhouse where they were raised, *The Modern Express* newspaper said. Disease control authorities have sent five investigators to the area to come up with a plan to stamp out the insects. The cockroach is generally considered a pest, but believers in traditional Chinese medicine — which uses both plants and animals, including endangered species — say extracts from it can treat diseases including cancer, reduce inflammation and improve immunity. — AFP

Egg rate

The National Egg Coordination Committee has fixed the rate of egg as Rs. 3.33

Fruit rot disease ravages arecanut crop in State



Arecanuts that dropped prematurely have been collected by grower Kerekodige Keshava Rao of Melbelrevillage in Chikmagalur district.

Heavy and incessant rain since the beginning of June till July end in six districts of Malnad and coastal Karnataka has dealt a serious blow to farmers, particularly arecanut growers who have lost considerable quantity of their crop.

Arecanut plantations, spread across 2.27 lakh hectares in these districts, have been affected by the fruit rot disease (Kole Roga) as continuous rain prevented spraying of copper sulphate fluid on arecanut bunches. The fluid had to be sprayed thrice — before the onset of the monsoon, just after the commencement of monsoon and about a month after the second spray — to prevent rotting of tender arecanuts.

“We could only complete the first spray,” said K. Shashishekhar, an arecanut grower in Kerekodige, Koppa taluk, Chikmagalur district. “It had been our daily routine to look at the skies in anticipation of a let-up in rain. However, it poured continuously for 60 days and we watched helplessly tender arecanuts falling down from the trees,” he said.

Amid shortage of labourers, Mr. Shashishekhar collected the fallen arecanuts with great difficulty and gathered them in the courtyard of his house for two reasons. One, to gather whatever produce was available and the other, to prevent further spread of the fungal disease in the plantation. When *The Hindu* visited Mr. Shashishekhar’s plantation last week, Prabhakar, another arecanut grower in the locality, who was helping spray copper sulphate fluid, said the fluid had to be sprayed to prevent the trees catching the fungal disease.

K. Keshava Rao, Mr. Shashishekhar’s father, said that they used to get about 10 quintals of red arecanut per acre. The disease has completely ravaged the crop. “It is difficult even to get two quintals from an acre now,” he said. Red arecanut used to fetch between Rs. 12,000 to Rs. 15,000 a quintal in the Shimoga market. Mr. Rao is worried over repayment of different loans even as he is afraid that growers cannot lead a normal life for, at least, the next two years.

According to Horticulture Department statistics, arecanut crop in about 88,000 hectares have been affected by the fruit rot disease and the degree of loss ranges from 40 per cent to 70 per cent. The loss is more than 50 per cent in 60,000 hectares, according to sources.

Highly insufficient

Udupi-Chikmagalur Lok Sabha Member K. Jayaprakash Hegde said that growers have demanded at least Rs. 25,000 per hectare compensation to each farmer. He expected Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who is visiting New Delhi on Monday, to make a specific request with the Union government for generous compensation for crop loss, not only for arecanut growers but all other farmers since a number of crops have been affected by heavy rain. Sringeri MLA D.N. Jeevaraj said that the proposed compensation was insufficient even to undertake copper sulphate fluid spray, which costs about Rs. 22,000 an acre (for three sprays). He said, “The government is saving hundreds of crores of rupees on purchase of power since the hydroelectric projects have enough water. The same amount could be paid to farmers, not only to arecanut growers but also all those who have lost other crops.”

IIHR finds biological method to control pest attack in brinjal crop

The vegetable accounts for the largest use of insecticides



Simple: A small paper card bearing the eggs of the predator parasite is tied to brinjal plants. The predator parasites get released and start preying on the shoot and fruit borer pest, thus helping farmers increase the brinjal yield.

Not many know that brinjal, a commonly used vegetable, accounts for the highest use of insecticides among all the vegetables in the country. This is mainly because farmers have no

option but to spray insecticides on a weekly basis 15 to 20 times in the six months of the crop life to save the yield as brinjal is highly susceptible to the “shoot and fruit borer” (*leucinodes orbonalis*) attack. This pest causes 30 to 100 per cent crop loss.

To end this problem, which is not only affecting human health and environment but also causing a huge drain on the farmers’ revenues in terms of crop losses and high costs of insecticides, the Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) has come out with a method of biological control of the pest.

Under this system, an insect parasite *Trichogramma chilonis* that predate on this deadly pest is mass produced and released into the brinjal fields in a systematic manner at regular intervals.

This method, which is not only eco-friendly but also cheaper and more effective than insecticides, has turned out to be a boon for farmers as it provides protection to the crop from the “shoot and fruit borer” pest without the use of insecticides, notes IIHR Director Amrik Singh Sidhu. According to him, it can result in savings of crores of rupees if a large number of brinjal farmers in the country opt for this method.

The biological method is so simple that it will be possible for any farmer to use it easily. “We will give farmers a small paper card that will have 250 to 400 eggs of the predator parasite appearing like dots. All that the farmers will have to do is to tie them either to the plants or small poles in the field located at a distance of about 10 ft. The predator parasites get released from this and start preying on the pest,” says A. Krishnamoorthy, Principal Scientist and head of IIHR’s division of Entomology and Nematology, who headed the efforts to develop and test this biological method involving fellow entomologist Ganga Vishalakshi.

In all, it would require 10 to 15 lakh parasites over six months to handle the pests in one hectare of land in addition to two sprays of Bt, he points out. “A farmer will be able to save a minimum of Rs. 25,000 per hectare through biological method as the weekly cost of this method will be only Rs. 150 to 200 as against Rs. 1,500 to 2,000 of each weekly insecticide spray, including labour charge. The total savings would touch a minimum of Rs. 1 lakh a hectare coupled with an increase in crop yield,” he says.

This technology, which was developed in 1985, was introduced in the fields around the IIHR campus located in Hesaraghatta in 2008 after testing for efficiency and environmental impact in different locations of the country. However, efforts are now being made to popularise this in the interest of protecting environment and increasing revenues of farmers with financial assistance from NABARD and the Department of Biotechnology, which have pumped in Rs. 8 lakh each, he said.

For details on biological pest control, contact A. Krishnamoorthy on 94485 03867 or Ganga Vishalakshi on 94485 51630.

Authorities raze vegetable market

CMC action follows a court order

The City Municipal Council (CMC) authorities on Sunday demolished the old vegetable market here, as directed by the court.

Although the CMC had constructed a new market, with all facilities, at a nearby place, a few vendors had not shifted to the new facility and had approached the court to stall demolition. However, the authorities convinced the court about the need to shift the market to a new spot.

Shifting of the market would relieve the general public from congestion and ease vehicular traffic on the road, the authorities had contended.

The demolition began at 7 a.m. and ended by noon. All sheds and old shops were razed. Municipal commissioner Ravindra Mallapur and engineer Chidanand Reddy supervised the operation.

Vegetables at your doorstep this Onam

The HortiCorp and Horticulture Mission have joined hands to allay fears of Onam celebrations being hit by a severe shortage of vegetables.

The two entities will ensure that people of Thiruvananthapuram get all essential vegetables at their doorsteps at least two days in advance to help them get their 'Onasadya' ready.

According to HortiCorp Managing Director K. Prathapan, who is also the director of the State Horticulture Mission, residents' associations are being roped in to see that this effort pays results.

All vegetables required for Onam will be made available for the associations about two to three days in advance, so that they could in turn sell them to the residents.

The HortiCorp will ensure that the sales are at prices 30 per cent less than those prevailing in the open market.

Efforts are already on to procure as much vegetables as possible from farmers inside the State with a team led by Mr. Prathapan reaching Munnar on Sunday.

Procurement will be done from areas including Munnar, Vattavada, Marayur, and Kanthalloor.

Arrangements are also in place with farmers outside the State for direct procurement in case of any shortage, Mr. Prathapan says.

The capital city will also have 20 mobile units of the HortiCorp, including the 'Haritha' mobile grocery units, making more rounds and for longer durations in the day for the festival. These are apart from the Onam bazaar already functioning at Palayam.

"Apart from the Onam bazaars that we have opened, there will be more stalls set up in association with the Supplyco as well.

Metro stalls are coming up in cities and we are thinking of setting up stalls at the block panchayat level as well," Mr. Prathapan says.

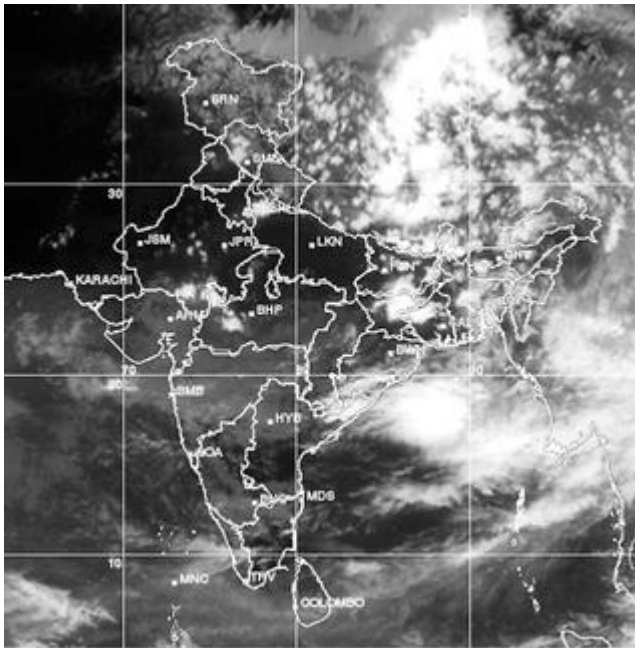
In the State capital, a 20,000-sqft procurement centre is in its finishing stages of construction at the World Market in Anayara.

It was completed in a record time after the work was launched less than two months ago. The procurement centre will be launched by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy in the first week of September. The centre is expected to help the capital district tackle any shortage of vegetables and also to help farmers here to sell their produce.

Sangam Dairy increases milk price

Sangam Dairy has increased the prices of milk with effect from August 26. The price of 500 ml of full cream milk is Rs.22, toned milk Rs.18, double toned milk Rs.16. The increase in price was attributed to rise in production costs, according to a press release.

Weather



	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	37	29	0	509
New Delhi (Sfd)	37	28	0	749
Chandigarh	35	27	0	736
Hissar	35	27	0	507
Bhuntar	33	21	0	391
Shimla	25	17	tr	747
Jammu	34	24	41	1081
Srinagar	32	19	0	209
Amritsar	35	27	0	741
Patiala	35	28	0	680
Jaipur	32	26	0	631
Udaipur	31	25	16	634
Allahabad	34	26	0	882
Lucknow	35	25	0	646
Varanasi	35	27	tr	603
Dehradun	32	23	4	2463
Agartala	34	27	0	678
Ahmedabad	30	24	3	749
Bangalore	26	19	15	399
Bhubaneshwar	34	26	0	613
Bhopal	29	24	1	1111
Chennai	35	26	0	439
Guwahati	36	27	0	629
Hyderabad	31	23	0	512
Kolkata	35	27	0	1308
Mumbai	29	25	8	2032
Nagpur	25	22	2	1323
Patna	36	27	0	297

Pune	28	21	tr	532
Thiruvananthapuram	32	24	0	870
Imphal	34	23	0	765
Shillong	25	18	33	759

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st June.

RAINFALL

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at a few places over east Rajasthan and Uttarakhand and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (2 cm and above) HIMACHAL PRADESH: Kasauli 5 and Dharamsala and Mandi 2 each, JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Jammu Airport 5, Jammu 4 and Samba 2, PUNJAB: Ludhiana 2, EAST RAJASTHAN: Dug 9, Banswara, Bhungra and Hindoli 5 each, Nasirabad, Tatgarh, Kesarpura, Badesar and Mandana 4 each, Jawaja, Bijoliya, Jahazapur, Begu, Kapasan, Nithua, Piplu and Vallabh Nagar 3 each and Udaipur, Chittorgarh and Baran 2 each, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Unnao tehsil 3 and UTTARAKHAND: Chamoli 4 and Bamba and Haldwani 2 each.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 27th August

2013 : Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. Rain/thundershowers may occur at a few places over Punjab and Haryana. Rain/thundershowers may occur at isolated places over rest of the region.

Heavy Rainfall: Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh on 26th August.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE

MORNING OF 27th August 2013: Partly cloudy sky. Rain/thundershowers would occur in some areas.

hindustantimes.com

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Aug 26

Max Min

34° | 27°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:24

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast








Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Aug 27

Max Min

34° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Aug 28	Thursday Aug 29	Friday Aug 30	Saturday Aug 31	Sunday Sep 1
				
34° 27° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Cloudy	33° 27° Cloudy	34° 27° Overcast	33° 27° Overcast

THE TIMES OF INDIA

One million cockroaches flee China farm: Report



Disease control authorities have sent five investigators to the area to come up with a plan to stamp out the insects.

At least one million [cockroaches](#) have escaped a farm in China where they were being bred for use in traditional medicine, a report said.

The cockroaches fled the facility in [Dafeng](#), in the eastern province of Jiangsu, for surrounding cornfields earlier this month after an "unknown perpetrator" destroyed the plastic greenhouse where they were raised, the Modern Express newspaper said.

Disease control authorities have sent five investigators to the area to come up with a plan to stamp out the insects.

Farm owner Wang Pengsheng invested more than 100,000 yuan (\$16,000) in 102 kilograms of [Periplaneta americana eggs](#) after spending six months developing a business plan, the

report Friday said.

The cockroach is generally considered a pest, but believers in traditional Chinese medicine -- which uses both plants and animals, including endangered species, say extracts from it can treat diseases including cancer, reduce inflammation and improve immunity.

By the time the greenhouse was damaged, more than 1.5 million cockroaches had hatched and were being fed food including "fruits and biscuits" every day, Wang was quoted as saying.

He had expected to make around 1,000 yuan profit for every kilogram of cockroaches sold, according to the report, but was now facing losses of hundreds of thousands of yuan.

125 Bihar farmers to attend Ahmedabad meet

PATNA: The Gujarat government has selected 125 farmers from different districts of [Bihar](#) to attend the three-day farmers' meet at Ahmedabad from September 9. It will bear their travel and other expenses.

Earlier, the Gujarat government had asked the Bihar government to send farmers from the state to participate in the conference which will be attended by farmers from 621 districts in the country.

Former deputy CM [Sushil Kumar Modi](#) on Sunday alleged that the list of 76 farmers prepared by the state's [agriculture department](#) was turned down by the Bihar government at the highest level.

A senior official of agriculture department of Gujarat government visited Patna last week and was informed about the state government's decision. Agriculture minister Narendra Singh recently said since it would be a political meet, the invitation was turned down.

According to Modi, the Gujarat government selected 125 farmers who have been honoured by the Centre. Bihar farmers would have showcased their achievements at the Ahmedabad meet but CM [Nitish Kumar](#) treats Gujarat like an enemy state, he alleged.

Modi said the Gujarat government has created an independent [feeder](#) for power supply to the farmers. This should be followed in Bihar, too. Against the promised 12 hours power supply in the rural areas, farmers are getting electricity for less than two hours. Bihar government should declare the entire state as drought-hit, said Modi, claiming that the rain deficit in the state was 45%.

The BJP leaders would stage dharnas at district headquarters next week demanding relief to the drought-hit farmers. The party has decided to raise drought as a big issue from next month. A committee headed by former minister Chandramohan Rai has been set up to organize meetings at district level.

Food Bill should benefit farmers: Sharad Pawar



Pawar stated that the decision to bring the bill will find a solution for malnutrition. (PTI)

As Parliament prepares to take up the Food Security Bill, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar speaks to the Indian Express about the bill and its implications.

What are your thoughts on the Food Security Bill

I was in FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization) in Rome. And one figure struck me in their report for this year on the overall health condition of young children — 71 per cent of children are facing the problem of malnutrition in India. It's a huge issue. How to resolve this? Provide a full meal. And a full meal means not just wheat and rice. You require vegetables, pulses, fruits and edible oil. If you are non-vegetarian, you require egg, meat and fish. Wheat and rice we have, but a lot of the other things are not available. You can see the prices of meat, poultry products and even some of the pulses are on the higher side and that's why young children are unable to get full nutrition in terms of calories. I think this decision on bringing a food security bill will definitely find a solution. Even today the bill is only supposed to give a guarantee for wheat and rice, but the rates of Rs 2 (wheat) and Rs 3 (rice) are even lower than the rates at which they are currently given to the BPL population. So large sections of people facing malnutrition today can save here and spend on vegetables,

fruits, pulses, meat and eggs. From that angle, it's a very good decision. And ultimately, if any country cannot provide food security, then what type of administration is it?

So I am for the bill. But there is also the other side. All this is possible only if my farmer is able to produce a substantial quantity of the food. Today we are fortunate. Five or six years ago we had to import, but today India is the largest exporter of rice in the world, the second largest exporter of wheat and sugar. About six years ago we were importing cotton, today India is the second largest exporter of cotton. My export earnings from agricultural produce is about Rs 2,32,000 crore. Things are definitely changing. We have to constantly improve productivity so that the farmer is not disheartened.

Is that a concern?

My worry is not today or tomorrow, but when it (Food Security Bill) will be in full swing. Demand will grow. By next year, the subsidy bill will go up to Rs 1,25,000 crore. My worry is that any finance minister or finance secretary will not be happy with this burden and their advice to the council of ministers will be, don't hike the minimum support price because this will only increase the burden. That will directly affect farmers. And if the farmer gets hurt, he will shift from crop A to B. If he shifts from wheat and rice to some other crop, how are we going to implement food security? We will have to import.

Secondly, what if there is one bad season due to drought or something? While we have made the provision in the bill to compensate financially, we will have to simultaneously make arrangements for food, and so we have to purchase from the international market. Now, international market players are worried that this could distort the global market. In fact, during lunch at the FAO meeting, I met agriculture and food ministers from many countries; they were asking curiously about the Food Security Bill. I asked them, why are you so curious? One of them said we are quite happy with the decision your government is taking, but we are worried that one bad year and you will come to the international markets, start purchasing and send prices shooting up because your demand will be high.

So, for that, we have no choice but to produce more. We have to provide money for irrigation, electricity, concentrate in a big way on research for development of new types of seeds. We have to see fertiliser is available. We have to develop the infrastructure of our marketing. We have to see that the farmer also benefits.

Will there be pressure on curbing exports due to the increased demand?

That's why we have to produce more. I am of the view there should be no restrictions on export and import of agricultural produce. Now, there was lot of pressure to ban export of onions. While nobody is exporting onions because domestic prices are so good, we should take corrective measures in advance to avoid such a situation. Unfortunately, not everybody takes these issues seriously. We had sent a circular on June 21 to all state governments with an offer. Since we had information that there would be a problem of onions, we tied up for large quantities at a particular rate near Nashik and communicated to all states, but not a single government responded. I am the policymaker, but agriculture is a state subject; we can only sound them. We said Rs 15.50 per kg plus only 2 per cent administrative charges. We also said we will not only purchase, but also store. We had especially tied up for storage.

So, exports will be affected?

Yes, if we don't take appropriate steps to improve production. But now the UPA government is quite serious about improving production. For instance, last year foodgrain production has gone up to 259 million tonnes, the highest in the last 60 years. In 2013-14, it will break all records because of the good monsoon. Till a few years back, we used to depend on Punjab,

Haryana and Western UP. Yes, these are the important states, but the worry was that due to continuous rotation of rice and wheat, the groundwater and soil texture is being affected, resulting in fatigue in the soil. So, we introduced the concept of bringing a green revolution to eastern India — we concentrated on Bihar, Chhattisgarh, eastern UP, Orissa, West Bengal and Assam. We provided a lot of support and I must say, irrespective of which party the chief minister belonged to, each cooperated immensely. Today, a substantial quantity is coming from these states to the national kitty. You will be surprised Chhattisgarh is a major producer of rice today. Orissa is also a very important producer of rice. A speciality of these states is there is no shortage of water unlike in other states such as Maharashtra, Karnataka or Gujarat. The main problem was technology, quality seeds and making arrangements at the proper time. Because of all these efforts, these eastern states are producing 55 per cent of the country's rice today. It has never happened before.

How is the country placed to meet the requirements of the bill?

What we produce today is sufficient to meet the requirements of the bill. But our efforts are not to take any risks and see how continuously we can improve production. That will give relief to the farmer and also allow him to continue to enter the international market as well as fulfil the domestic requirement.

But most steps you have identified are long-term in nature?

Some steps we can do immediately. Credit, why should we delay? Fertiliser, MSP, why should we delay? We have gone in that direction, that's why we are here. But there my worry is about financial resources. There is one view in my party about the timing of this bill because of the weakening rupee. Certain sections in my party feel this is not the time to roll out populist schemes. But then this has been in the manifesto.

Do you share their view?

Not necessarily. Because we will not be able to implement this policy this year. Delhi and Haryana have done something, but not all states. The ordinance gives six months to all states to finalise the list of beneficiaries. We issued the ordinance in July, so the lists will be ready only by January. Eventually, we will be ready to fully start in the next financial year. So this year, when we are quite worried about economic issues, I don't think there will be too much pressure on the economy because of this. There will be some states that will start, but their requirements will together not be that high.

Can genetically modified crops play a role in ensuring food security?

Firstly, nobody should oppose efforts in science and research in any field. India is very conservative about GM foods. Till date, we have only cleared one crop, cotton. Six years back, India was importing cotton. Last year, we exported 81 million bales of cotton, making us the second largest exporter. In 2003-04, the area under Bt cotton was 1.23 per cent of the total cotton cultivation of 137 lakh bales. In 2012-13, it is 91 per cent and production is 352 lakh bales. This jump shows that the farmer has accepted Bt cotton which has, in turn, influenced productivity. But knowing this well, we are very, very cautious. If we have to clear any crop, we do trials for years together in the north, east and west, even during different seasons. We see if there are any effects to the soil, cattle or on another crop and also human beings. So we take precautions from all angles and only after five or six years of observation does the government take any decision. Now, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research is in my department. We are doing this job. But the clearance for these varieties is not in my ministry. That we have kept in the environment ministry.

I can understand that we have to be very careful, but I don't understand why ban, why not allow trials. There are a number of crops where our scientists have developed a good variety of transgenic crops but they are not even allowed to take trials. When we are discussing food security, we cannot bypass modern technology and new varieties that are providing more productivity. So in the larger interest of the nation and also from the food security angle, we

cannot oppose GM just for the sake of opposition. Days ago, you had farmers from Punjab, Haryana, and even southern states demanding the removal of the ban. You see, we should take the views of those who are supposed to produce and not a few NGOs.

Are you disappointed at the state of economic reforms today?

Not at all. In fact, if you see the country's growth rate, we have maintained above 7 per cent, except this year. Yes, we are facing problems. I am not saying we are in a healthy position but it's the policy of liberalisation that has improved productivity. Take automobiles. In my state, I remember I was the chief minister and Fiat was a manufacturer and there was a quota for the chief minister to allot 10 vehicles every month. I recollect there was even a quota for Bajaj scooters. MLAs and other workers used to come to me with requests to allot a scooter. Today you see fleets of scooters and cars on sale across India. Prior to liberalisation, I argued with the industries minister to allow Fiat to produce more than 60 vehicles a day. So, there was even a restriction on how many vehicles one can produce in a day. Today that is not the case.

But should more have been achieved by now?

Well, at least we have done this much. Take the case of IT. Pune alone has 50,000 IT technocrats.

What about mining?

You see, there are certain issues on which, because of courts and environment, we couldn't do much. The government policy was clear. But suppose the highest court of the country puts a total ban on mining, then what can we do? It has affected us. In fact, one of the reasons we are facing this problem today is because our export of iron ore is substantially down. The foreign exchange that used to accrue has now stopped. And even steel factories are unable to run at full capacity.

So, are courts at fault?

I am not blaming anybody. But I am making the point that whatever we have achieved is because of the policy of liberalisation.

What is your outlook for the future?

We should continue (with liberalisation). My own assessment is that this year agriculture alone can improve the economy of the country. If a substantial population, about 55-60 per cent that depends on agriculture, can produce well and get good prices, then their purchasing power is improved, which will impact other sectors. Rajiv Gandhi started this (liberalisation) process but then there was a gap. Then Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh — I was part of that government — took a bold decision and that paid dividends. Yes, there are exceptions like this year but then some other decisions are being taken to improve the investment climate.

There is a view that the situation is almost similar to the pre-1991 days.

Certain decisions that were taken have certainly created an impression in the eyes of a lot of people that we are going back. But if we have taken those decisions, we have also started taking corrective action. See, ultimately, we have no choice. Anyone can rule, but the policymaker has to improve the investment climate, take action in such a manner where your productivity and production is improved. And for that purpose, a restrictive policy in any sector will cause harm.

What were those decisions?

It's not proper for me to get into this as I am part of the government.

Food Security Bill will push India toward malnutrition: Modi



Attacking Prime Minister Manmohan Singh over the proposed Food Security Bill, Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi today said the bill, in its current form, will push the country toward "malnutrition".

In a letter to the Prime Minister written on August 7, Modi claimed that the National Food Security Ordinance (NFSO) promulgated by the Centre, which is likely to be passed in Parliament as the Food Security Bill, has inherent flaws and deficiencies, since it fails to address both calorific and nutritional security of the poor.

"In a nation concerned about meeting nutritional requirements, it is a bill that will push the nation towards malnutrition. The proposed Food Security Bill will keep the poor hungry and snatch away his food," he said.

The Gujarat chief minister said that below poverty line families which get 35 kg of foodgrains at present, would henceforth get only 25 kg under the proposed Bill. "Your PM's policy makers are not aware of commoners' plight, nor are they aware of their living conditions. That is why people from your government announce that we can get a meal for Rs 5 or Rs 12," Modi said.

"This mindset gets reflected in the Bill too. Prime Ministerji, you are an economist and the earlier you understand the economics of a poor man's meals, the brighter will be the possibilities of him getting food," he said in the letter. "The most backward are not going to benefit from your bill. Instead, because of your new Food Security Bill, the below poverty line families are going to be burdened further," the Gujarat chief minister added.

"I have noted with deep concern that the ordinance proposes to reduce entitlements of below poverty line families from 35 kg of food grains per family to 25 kg per average family of five," Modi said in the letter.

Due to this 10 kg reduction, every family below the poverty line would be compelled to buy this quantity from the open market and under such inflationary pressures, such families would have to shell out an additional Rs 100, which would translate into an annual financial burden of Rs 1,000 per per family, he claimed.

Criticising the entitlement of 5 kg of grain per month per person Modi claimed the ordinance does not assure an individual of having two meals a day.

"An adult person needs 2,500 calories per day as per National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) recommendations, but your scheme proposes to give 165 grams per person per day, which would provide only 350 calories, which is hardly 20 per cent of his daily calorie requirements," he noted.

Modi said that even under the mid-day meal scheme, school going children are entitled to about 150 grams of food grain and 30 grams of pulses for one meal.

"As against this, an adult food insecure person is proposed to be given 165 grams for two meals per day. This does not address even calorific security, not to talk about nutritional security, which is the main objective of the Food Security Bill," he claimed.

"Approximately 100 grams of food grains provides 350 calories. As per this calculation, one person should get 21 kg of food grain, against which you (Centre) plan to give only 7 kg of food grains," Modi noted.

"You are not able to offer even half of the calories required by a below poverty line family. So how will the country improve and how will food security be achieved," Modi alleged.

DECCAN Chronicle

Jayalalithaa calls for crucial changes in Food Bill

Chennai: Chief minister J. Jayalalithaa's AIADMK will vote against the Food Security Bill if taken up in the Lok Sabha on Monday with its "present amendments" and would support it only if the amendments she sought were incorporated.

In her letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, chief minister J. Jayalalithaa said that following her suggestion a proviso had been added in clause 3 of the Bill, protecting the existing level of allocation and offtake of food grains under the public distribution system (PDS). The total quantity that each state was eligible for had been specified in the newly introduced schedule IV but "this leaves the fixation of the issue price to the discretion of the Central government."

If the issue price was fixed at the economic cost of rice, this would place a financial burden of around Rs 1,000 crore on the State government, she contended.

Given the fiscal impact on states and the sensitivity of the issue in Tamil Nadu, she urged Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to provide a legally binding assurance that the difference in quantity between what has been assured through the newly introduced second proviso to Clause 3 (1) and what is eligible under Clause 3 (1) read with Clause 3 (2) would be supplied

to the States at the price of Rs 3 per kg or at the current price applicable for Above Poverty Line families of Rs 8.30 per kg.



Food Bill: Jaya takes on DMK

Chief minister J. Jayalalitha took potshots at her party's rival, wondering whether DMK chief M. Karunanidhi would support the Food Security Bill in the present form, which was against the interests of Tamil Nadu.

Asking Karunanidhi to spell out his stand vis-à-vis the Food Security Bill, she said, "DMK chief M Karunanidhi should make it clear on whether his party will support or oppose this bill which is against the people of Tamil Nadu. If he supports the bill which takes away the rights of Tamil Nadu, then it would be sheer betrayal of the people."

In a statement here on Sunday, Jayalalitha said after she expressed concerns that the state's monthly quota of rice would come down in the event of the implementation of the initiative, the Centre had only brought in an amendment that would ensure that the allocation of rice to states would not be reduced under the proposed act.

And at the same time, the Centre made a provision to allot 21.88 lakh metric tonnes of rice annually at Rs 3 per kg to Tamil Nadu, but mentioned that the remaining 14.90 lakh metric tonnes would be given at a rate fixed by it.

"This is not acceptable. It will be fair if the entire 36.78 lakh metric tonnes of (the state's annual quota of) rice was allotted at Rs 3 per kg," she insisted. If the Centre provided 14.90 lakh metric tonnes of rice at its procurement price of Rs 19.11, then it would impose a burden of an additional sum of Rs 1000 crore worth of expenditure on the state.

Further, the state was spending around Rs 5,000 crore per year on providing foodgrains for free or at subsidised rates and had allocated Rs 2,525 crore alone for providing free rice.

Chicken prices set to escalate



Thiruvananthapuram: The chicken prices in the state are set to soar with the commercial taxes department making an upward revision of the floor rate to Rs 95 per kg from Rs 70 for collecting Value Added Tax at 14.5 per cent for the poultry chicken imported to the state. The new rates will become effective from August 29.

According to the revised rates, VAT will move up to Rs 14 per kg from the existing Rs 10.15, Benoy Kurian, general secretary of All-Kerala Chicken Traders Association told DC. This will be a boon to those evading taxes, he said. “The state government has given an Onam gift to tax evaders,” he said.

The traders associations are planning to launch an indefinite strike from Monday, he said. The decision to increase the rate will be result in sharp rise in the price of chicken, he added. The VAT rate of one-day old chicken was also raised to 45 per bird from the earlier Rs 20. According to the new order, the floor rate was Rs 70 per kg for poultry chicken as existed in July 2011. But, selling price of chicken had gone up since then, leading to revenue loss to the exchequer.

At present, the price of live chicken varies from Rs 90 to Rs 120 per kg, it pointed out. DC had reported about the imminent hike in VAT rates on August 18.

Jaya cites price catch, will vote against Food bill



Jayalalithaa said AIADMK will vote against the Bill in its current form in Parliament. (PTI/File)

Noting that some amendments have indeed been made in the Food Security Bill as per her earlier suggestions, Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa, in a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, said other outstanding issues have to be addressed if the law is to assure food security to the nation.

Later, in a separate statement, reiterating that the AIADMK will vote against the Bill in its current form in Parliament, Jayalalithaa asked DMK chief M Karunanidhi to clarify whether his party would support the legislation which was still against the interests of the people of Tamil Nadu.

Recalling her August 2 letter suggesting amendments to the Bill, Jayalalithaa, in her letter to the Prime Minister released to the media on Sunday, said some of her suggestions have been accepted by the Centre and changes have been introduced.

Most importantly, she said a proviso has been added to Clause 3 of the Bill protecting the existing level of allocation and offtake of food grains under the Public Distribution System. The total quantity that each State is eligible to has also been specified in the newly introduced Schedule IV.

However, Jayalalithaa said the proviso leaves the fixing of the issue price to the discretion of the Centre. In this regard, in the statement issued later, she said that of the 36.78 lakh metric tonnes of rice Tamil Nadu was entitled to as per the Bill, only 21.88 lakh metric tonnes would be issued at a price of Rs 3 per kg. For the rest of the rice working out to 14.90 lakh metric tonnes, the Centre would fix the price.

In the event the issue price is fixed at the economic cost of rice, it would be a huge financial burden of Rs 1,000 crore on Tamil Nadu. "I strongly urge you to provide a legally binding

assurance that the difference in quantity between what has been assured and what is eligible will be supplied to the states at the price of Rs 3 per kg,” her letter said.

Lake water release on 27th August



Chief Minister J Jayalithaa ordered release of water from Veeranam lake for irrigation. | EPS

Following representations from farmers in Cuddalore district and some neighbouring areas, Chief Minister J Jayalithaa on Saturday ordered release of water from Veeranam lake for irrigation from August 27 for as many as 44,856 acres of land in Cuddalore district and in the taluks of Chidambaram and Kattumannarkoil.

The Chief Minister also ordered release of water for irrigation from Tirumurthi dam from August 26. A total of 96,854 acres of land in Tirupur and Coimbatore districts would be benefitted.

The Chief Minister granted a solatium of Rs Three lakh each to the families of eight persons who were killed in elephant attacks in the recent period and two persons killed when attacked by bear and crocodile.

The Chief Minister expressed grief over the loss of lives in the tragic incidents.

The victims were: Subramaniam (Panappalli), Sennaperumal (Periyur village), Arumugam (Kurumbapalayam), Padma (Veppampatti), Lakshmi (Mannavanur), Muniyan (Koothampalayam), Thottaiya (Thingalur), Jothirajan (Perampattu), Satheeshkumar (Ramanaickenpalayam) and Puttanna (Thevarpetta).

Now, it's time to chicken out

With the Kerala Commercial Taxes Department hiking the base price, chicken will get dearer. The department has decided to increase the base price of chicken from the present Rs 75 to Rs 95, which has resulted in the poultry farmers paying Rs 28 extra as tax for every chicken they sell.

This has forced the poultry farmers to hike the price of chicken, which has already touched Rs 150 a kilogram.

“Not only chicken, the price of all essential commodities including onion, ginger and green chilly, that are essential for preparing dishes with chicken in it are on the rise. A majority of the hotels are on the verge of closing down as they are unable to bear the steep price hike. The KHRA has convened a meeting this week to discuss the steps needed to be taken to tackle the issue.” said Kerala Hotels and Restaurant’s Association (KHRA) general secretary Jose Mohan.

He said that for all the non-vegetarian hotels, chicken items are the hot favourite of the customers. “Chicken was considered a moderately-priced dish and was in demand. But now, in these circumstances, the hoteliers will be forced to hike the price. But, they fear that the further hike in price will have an adverse effect in the demand, which will affect the overall sales,” he added.



The price of mutton is nearly Rs 500 per kilogram while that of beef has crossed Rs 200 per kilogram. Fish, which is another favourite non-veg dish of Malayalis is also increasing. For one kg of sardine, the price is Rs 100.

“For instance, mutton biriyani and fish biriyani are priced high and are considered slightly expensive. Chicken biriyani is moderately priced and is having a huge demand. But, the price hike will make it equally expensive like mutton biriyani,” he added.

Jose Mohan said that KHRA had actually scheduled the meeting for Wednesday, but later postponed it. “But we have not taken a final decision on the date of the meeting. However, we will convene the meeting before September 2,” he said.

He added that the number of hotels that are closing down owing to the pressure of commodity price hike are increasing every year. We will soon prepare a list of hotels that have closed down in the last two years. We have already asked our members to prepare a district-wise list. The assessment survey will be launched at Ernakulam next month and will be extended to other districts too,” he added.

Meanwhile, the Poultry Farmers and Traders Association had already stated that they will go for an indefinite strike if the government does not withdraw its decision to hike the base price of chicken. According to them, Kerala is the lone state in India which is levying tax for chicken. It is estimated that nearly 6.5 lakh chicken are sold every day in Kerala out of which the hotels and restaurants consuming nearly 80 per cent of it.

JAYA TO PM: CHANGES IN FOOD BILL NOT SATISFACTORY

The amendments incorporated in the National Food Security Bill do not meet the concerns and apprehensions expressed by the States, according to J Jayalalithaa, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the Chief Minister, who has been expressing her reservations on the Bill since it came to the public domain said the amendments do not meet the expectations of Tamil Nadu which stands to lose one lakh tonnes of rice every month once the Bill is implemented.

THE HINDU Business Line

Fruit rot disease to impact areca arrival in Feb-March

Farmers expect more than 60 per cent crop loss



Heavy loss: A picture provided by Ramesh Kaintaje, an arecanut grower from Dakshina Kannada district, showing arecanuts affected by fruit rot disease at his plantation.

Mangalore, Aug 25:

The arrival of new stocks of white arecanut is likely to be affected in 2014 because of fruit rot disease in plantations.

Usually, the new stocks of white arecanut arrive in the market during February-March.

Ganesh Bhat K., a farmer from Kavalkatte village in Belthangady taluk of Dakshina Kannada district, told *Business Line* that most farmers have lost more than 65 per cent of their crops because of fruit rot disease in the plantations.

Some may not even get the amount they invested on their plantations this year.

M.G. Satyanarayana, Vice-President of All-India Arecanut Growers' Association, said that some farmers in Sullia taluk of Dakshina Kannada district lost almost 100 per cent of the crop this year.

Some arecanut-growing regions witnessed more than 200 inches of rainfall this year. This increased the onset of the disease even more, he said.

Ramesh Kaintaje, a farmer from Bantwal taluk of the district, said that the crop loss is more than 60 per cent in the arecanut-growing regions in Karnataka.

"Though 25 per cent loss is common to all growers, it is nearly 80 per cent among 25 per cent of farmers in the region," he said.

One of the main reasons for the rapid spread of fruit rot disease is the continuous rainfall for almost two months in the arecanut-growing regions.

Usually farmers spray copper sulphate solution to the plants at the beginning of the monsoon to prevent the onset of fruit rot disease.

Fruit rot is characterised by rotting and heavy shedding of immature nuts. Continuous heavy rainfall with intermittent bright sunshine hours, low temperature and high humidity are the factors suitable for the spread of disease.

Kaintaje said that there was a break of hardly 5-6 days for rain during the monsoon.

"How can villagers take up copper sulphate spraying with the limited manpower available in that short window? Added to this, there is labour scarcity to take up such activities," he said.

Ganesh Bhat said that he has been involved in farming for the past two decades.

However, he did not see such a huge loss in arecanut plantations due to fruit rot disease.

Even plants are affected by this disease in some plantations, he said.

Bhat said that the research institutes meant for arecanut sector should focus on finding solutions to this problem.

Kaintaje said: "Arecanut research institute simply comes out with advisories on what needs to be done to prevent such diseases. Every farmer is aware of that. But what a farmer can do when there is no let up in rain? Did they (research institutes) suggest any alternatives to that?"

K. Padmanabha, President of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd, said that fruit rot disease has made a huge impact in the major five arecanut growing districts in Karnataka.

Though Campco has given representations to the Government in this regard, the people's representatives from these regions are silent on the issue, he said.

Urging the Government to increase the compensation to the affected farmers, he said the compensation should be directly disbursed to them.

Now the Government disburses Rs 4,800 as compensation for an acre of plantation. It should be increased to at least Rs 1 lakh an acre, he added.

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Fall in arrivals pushes tomato prices up



Karnal, Aug 25:

Fall in arrivals in the market pushed up tomato prices by Rs 50-125 a quintal on Sunday. Around 650 crates (of 25 kg each) of different varieties of tomatoes arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted at Rs 2,100-4,150.

Around 1,000 crates of varieties such as Himsona and hybrid were received in the Karnal district.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that lower arrivals pushed tomato prices marginally up.

There was no particular reason behind the fall in arrivals and it may improve in the coming days, he added.

Arrivals are mainly from Kullu, Nashik and Solan, said Vikas Sachdeva.

Arrivals from Nashik have improved over the last few days and total arrivals in the Karnal may touch 900-1,000 crates a day in the coming days, he added.

Out of total arrivals, about 20 per cent stock was of low quality.

Around 35 per cent was of medium quality.

While about 45 per cent of total arrivals were of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality improved by Rs 125 a quintal and quoted at Rs 4,000-4,150.

The prices of medium quality produce went up by Rs 100 and quoted at 2,900-3,100 while low quality produce was at Rs 2,100-2,250, Rs 50 up from the previous levels.

On Sunday, some five per cent of the total arrival remained unsold.

Traders expect that the market may continue to rule around current levels but the quality of the stock will be a matter of concern.

Mixed trend in N. Indian tea sale

Kolkata, Aug 25: A mixed trend in tea prices was noticed at Sale Number 34 at the Kolkata tea auction last week.

According to J. Thomas & Company Pvt Ltd, the tea auctioneers, the average price of CTC leaf was lower at Rs 143. 67 a kg as compared to Rs 152.35 in the previous week (Sale No. 33) and the volumes unsold too were higher at 30.7 per cent (16.38 per cent).

Orthodox on other hand presented a different picture, at least pricewise. The average price was Rs 226.27 (Rs 224.03).

However the volumes unsold were 13.8 per cent (13. 32 per cent). Last week, the total offerings (packages) at the three North Indian auction centres at Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri were 4,73,463 as compared to 1,45,987 in the corresponding sale (No. 34) of the previous year. The offerings at Kolkata comprised CTC/dust 1,63,051 (1,45,987), orthodox 41,932 (24,869) and Darjeeling 9,857 (6,866). The corresponding figures for two other centres, dealing mostly in CTC/dust, were: Guwahati 1,54, 288 (1.09,957) and Siliguri 1,04,335(96,193).

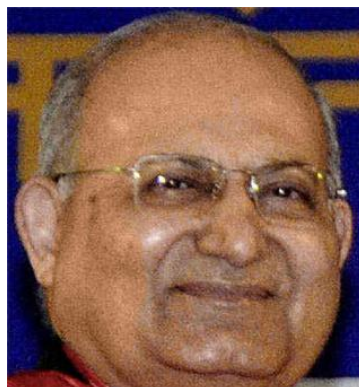
Assam CTC teas were irregularly lower following quality with selected larger brokens and fannings around last levels following enquiries from the exporters. Dooars were barely steady and irregularly lower.

Tata Global was active. Hindustan Unilever operated selectively for the mediums. Western India operated actively for the liquoring teas. There was a fair amount of enquiry from other internal and local sections.

Orthodox tippy teas sold well in line with quality. The remainder sold at around last and irregularly lower rates. The CIS and West Asian shippers were active. There was some Continental interest on the tippy teas. Hindustan Unilever operated selectively. Darjeeling offerings met with limited enquiry. Selected whole leaf varieties maintaining quality were readily absorbed. The remainder eased in value and witnessed withdrawals. Brokens and fannings also declined.

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‘Focus on oilseeds needs to be revived’



Hyderabad, Aug. 25: R.S. Paroda, former Director-General of ICAR, has called for revival of focus on oilseeds in order to reduce dependency on imports and encourage domestic production.

“We must have a clear national policy of bridging the yield gaps and increased oilseeds production to reduce vegetable oil imports as was achieved during the Technology Mission on Oilseeds in the early 1990s,” he said.

Delivering the M.V. Rao Lecture on emerging concerns of Indian agriculture here, he had said that there had always been a huge gap between the domestic demand and production.

Duty changes

Referring to the changes in duties made now and then in the Exim Policy, he said it was like fire fighting.

“You can not depend on this forever.

“You need to have a long term policy,” he said.

He said the demand for vegetable oils would only grow as incomes grow. The per capita consumption would grow up to 16.43 kg a year by 2020 from about 14 kg now.

It would go up to 17.52 kg by 2030 and 19.16 by 2050.

The demand for edible oils from industry too would grow.

support price

He said support price would play an important role in increasing the oilseed area.

“The support price is evidently in clear favour of rice and wheat compared to oilseeds mainly on account of food security considerations.

Similar consideration is warranted for oilseeds as well,” he felt.

Paroda said low productivity and uncertain production of oilseeds was mainly due to their cultivation under rainfed conditions.

It was also constrained by several biotec stresses such insect pests and disease that were being further aggravated by changing climatic conditions.

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Pepper remains firm on short supply



Kochi, Aug 25: Pepper futures were buoyant last week on good demand amid tight supply.

The spot market continued to show an uptrend last week following tight availability amid strong demand from upcountry markets.

However, at the end of the week as the prices have crossed Rs 400 a kg level, some selling pressure was seen.

Those who are holding their produce were showing the tendency to liquidate. Ranjkumari pepper was offered at Rs 425 a kg while High Range material at Rs 410 and that from the plains at Rs 400-405 depending upon the quality.

At the same time, demand from the upcountry markets is expected to pick up in the coming days after the “Pournami”, they said.

Meanwhile, the trade claimed that much of the material arriving from the plains and Wayanad had high moisture content and was fungus infested.

Harvesting in Tamil Nadu’s Palani hills, Yercaud regions was in full swing, although the output is much less.

To meet the upcountry demand, Tamil Nadu based interstate dealers were actively covering from Idukki district of Kerala.

Erode is claimed to have become a major hub for pepper trade after turmeric, they said.

They were buying on cash-and-carry basis from the door steps of the growers and even ready to buy MG 1 at Rs 425 a kg, they claimed.

Sept and Oct contracts on the NMCE continued to increase last week and they were up by Rs 1,064 and Rs 1,824 respectively to Rs 44,000 and Rs 44,900.

Total turn over moved up by 29 tonnes to 129 tonnes.

Total open interest went up by 20 tonnes to 46 tonnes.

Spot prices also continued its uptrend by Rs 500 to close at Rs 40,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 42,500 (garbled).

Indian parity in the international market moved up marginally following the strengthening of the rupee at \$7,025 a tonne (c&f) Europe at \$7,275 a tonne (c&f) US.
