

01 July, 2013

Surprise over World Food Prize for GMO scientists

It is a prize from Monsanto to Monsanto, says one NGO

A selection committee chaired by M.S. Swaminathan awarding the World Food Prize for 2013 to three scientists including American multinational agricultural biotechnology corporation Monsanto's chief technology officer, despite prevalent controversies and concerns over the technology of genetically modified organisms, has added fuel to the worldwide GMO debate.

The honour and cash prize of \$250,000 is shared by Robert T. Fraley, Monsanto's executive vice-president and chief technology officer, Marc Van Montagu, founder of Institute of Plant Biotechnology Outreach in Belgium, and Mary-Dell Chilton, Founder and Fellow of Syngenta Biotechnology.

In a written statement issued during a ceremony to announce the prize in Washington, Professor Swaminathan said the award was especially fitting this year. "The World Food Prize is awarded this year to some of the pioneers of the New Genetics who have opened up opportunities for achieving a balance between human numbers and the human capacity to produce adequate food."

The World Food Prize Foundation said the work of the three scientists in biotechnological research (involving insertion of foreign genes into plants) had led to the development of a host of high yielding and pest-resistant GM crops.

REACTIONS

Non-governmental organisations, however, say that despite claims that genetically engineered crops can feed a projected nine billion people by 2050, in 17 years GM seed companies have not gone beyond a 4 per cent area globally. Even this has been in cash crops like cotton, corn, canola and soybean which predominantly only have non-food uses and do not contribute to food security.

In India, several civil society and farmers groups expressed dismay at the selection. Said Navdanya's Vandana Shiva: "It is a prize from Monsanto to Monsanto because they are one of the sponsors of the award, as also is Syngenta. It comes at a time when genetic engineering as a tool for improving yields and reducing chemical use has failed and there is empirical evidence that there is no increase in yields but rise in superpests and superweeds. Data has shown that non-chemical ecological farming is producing more food and better nutrition."

Aruna Rodrigues, lead petitioner in a pending public interest litigation petition in the Supreme Court on GMOs, said: "The conflict of interest betrays an increasing confidence that genetic engineering companies can do what they like, cocking a snook at the science and official statistics which tell the real story — about Intellectual Property

Rights, access to food by those who need it most, its production, distribution and sovereignty. In short, food security that is separated by a deep gulf from GMOs.”

Suman Sahai of the Gene Campaign said the World Food Prize is meant to encourage efforts to enhance the productivity of small farmers with the overall goal of achieving a better level of global food security. “It is not meant to reward aggressive promoters of biotechnology, which everybody recognises is not the answer to food security.”

“This mockery of the World Food Prize being given to corporate-sponsored biotech scientists shows a concerted effort to ensure that farmer-controlled sustainable alternatives remain invisible and unsupported,” said Kavitha Kuruganti, national convener of the Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture.

“This is like mortgaging farming to MNCs,” said Yudhvir Singh of the Bhartiya Kisan Union. “Has the father of the Green Revolution in India lost faith in established agricultural research and is now promoting genetically engineered crops?” he asked, referring to Professor Swaminathan.

POSITION IN INDIA

In India, a Supreme Court-appointed Technical Expert Committee (TEC) has recommended a 10-year moratorium on open field trials of transgenic food crops until adequate regulatory mechanisms and safety standards are put in place. There is also opposition to the proposed Biotechnology Regulatory Authority Bill that calls for a single-window clearance to GM crops as well monitoring by the same agency.

Vast areas of cultivated land flooded

Thousands of banana plants destroyed in heavy rain



Rain fury: Farmers on the 762-acre Puthenkaayal Island claim they have suffered losses of up to Rs.5 crore due to heavy rain this month.— Photo: H. Vibhu

Farmers on the 762-acre Puthenkaayal Island falling under Vechoor and Arpookkara panchayats in Kottayam district claim they have suffered losses of up to Rs.5 crore due to heavy rains this month. Hundreds of acres of banana and coconut cultivation, and several fish farms on the island have been submerged.

The island, located about 30 km from Kochi, was reclaimed from the Vembanad Lake along with islands such as Rani and Chithira to grow paddy under the 'Grow More Food' campaign after World War II and in the face of severe food shortage in the country.

President of Kaipuzha-Vechoor Kaayal Karshaka Sahakarana Sangham K.J. Joseph said farmers, most of them small and marginal operators, had lost thousands of banana plants to the floodwaters on the island that lies below the mean sea level. The island is kept dry by heavy de-watering operations during the monsoon months with the help of a 70 HP pump and six 40 HP pumps.

However, power supply to these pumps was cut off at the end of May after the islanders ran up a bill arrear of around Rs.50 lakh. Mr. Joseph claimed that the islanders were eligible for free power supply for agricultural activities up to two hectares. However, the agriculture department has refused free power supply.

The matter is pending before the High Court of Kerala after the islanders filed a writ petition against a report by the Agricultural Production Commissioner (APC) which stated that the island did not have much of agricultural activities. P.D. Shaji, a farmer who has an informal arrangement with several land owners on the island to cultivate around 25 acres, said he had lost 20,000 banana plants, most of them bunched. He also lost all his investment in a large fish pond, the stocks from which escaped during the heavy flooding. "I have lost a lifetime of investments," he said. A farmer invests at least Rs.100 per banana plant before he can harvest the bunches, he said.

Joy Mathew, a director board member of the 486-member farmers' collective founded in 1950, said he had lost extensive banana cultivation to the floodwaters.

Thankappan, a daily wage earner who lives on the mainland opposite the island, said people on the mainland south of the island depended on it for fodder and fuel items from coconut trees. The floods have completely cut off the source of fodder for nearly 1,000 heads of cattle, he said.

Fruits of technology

Trend Not just clothes and accessories, you can now shop for fruits online. Priyadarshini Paitandy lists some options in the city



Apile of gleaming red cherries, bright green star fruits and cheerful peach apricots, all neatly bundled in baskets and being dispatched. Where to? To the many people who shop for fruits online, a trend that's catching up.

The online portals first beckoned books, cds and clothes, soon grocery and vegetables followed suit and now it's the turn of fruits to have their space in the virtual world.

T. Thiyagarajan, director, Frrutto.com, who started the website along with K. Sudarkodi and R. Suresh, says, "We have been in the import business for more than 20 years. We noticed an increase in online trading activity and tried to make the most of it by launching this online fruit delivery website...the reach is more this way. We wanted to make it convenient for our consumers."

Frrutto currently has a consumer base of 2,600 clients and offers around 55 varieties of fruit. How difficult was it to overcome the touch-buy mindset of people when it comes to buying fruits? "While delivering we instruct the person to unwrap the basket and allow the customer to check the fruits. If there is any defect we promptly replace. We also provide specifications on our site about each fruit and plan to add sugar content and other such details," he says.

There has been a general concern about pesticides in fruits and artificial wax coating, how does the organisation check on that? "Any edible item being imported is inspected by the plant quarantine organisation here. They have norms for every item," he says.

Before the fruits are dispatched by Frrutto, numerous checks such as for freshness, damage and pesticides are conducted. Most of the fruits are from the U.S., New Zealand, Australia, Egypt, Chile, South Africa...About 40 per cent of the produce is acquired from local farmers. "People expect more from locally produced fruits because they compare it with the imported ones. Pre-harvest technique is important. There is a difference in quality because in India we have farmers who aren't able to invest much. We are trying to help them by educating them about modern growing and harvesting techniques," explains Thiyagarajan.

While Frrutto does it on a bigger scale there are quite a few websites in the city that are into online fruit retailing on a smaller scale. Amuthavalli, proprietor, Angaadi.in that was started two years ago, says, "We wanted to reach out to those who dislike shopping for fruits and vegetables in chaotic markets. As we cut down on the wastage, our prices are also lesser." As of now they only deliver in OMR but by the end of this year they plan to extend to other parts of the city as well. "Because of the acceptance of this model we see quite a bit of competition these days," says Amuthavalli and adds, "We don't have a minimum order amount and have also delivered for as little as Rs.5." Trailing the popularity, Blesson Joseph too jumped onto the bandwagon in April, with shopeasyindia.com "It's convenient if most of our daily needs are available online. Everybody is busy, so shopping for fruits online can save time."

Unlike Frrutto which has its storage unit in Koyambedu and Angaadi which procures its orders from there, this website has tied up with nearby shops for fruits. “We require 24 hours to deliver but most often we try to do it on the same day,” says Joseph.

Since some of these websites also list exotic fruits which aren't usually available in the market, clients get to sample new varieties. Rambutan, durian, dragon fruit, mangosteen, soursoup (locally produced fruit) are some of the popular exotic fruits that people are trying out in addition to the usual apples, bananas and mangoes.

“And it's not just the young working professionals who buy fruits online these websites have clients across all age groups. Sometimes people who are abroad order for their parents here,” says Amuthavalli.

Going by the trend, haggling with fruit vendors could well be a thing of the past

Pachyderms damage fields in Tsundupalle

A herd of elephants strayed into agricultural fields in Tsundupalle mandal for the fourth successive day on Sunday.

The pachyderms damaged an electric motor and water pipelines in the fields of a farmer Sudhakar Reddy and damaged aloe plants in Jayachandra fields in Machireddigaripalle village in Tsundupalle mandal, according to forest officials.

Streamline purchase and sale of cotton: SIHMA

Hosiery manufacturers in Tirupur cluster have urged the Union Government to streamline the purchase and sale of cotton that could benefit growers, sellers and users of cotton within the country.

South India Hosiery Manufacturers Association (SIHMA) president A.C. Eswaran, in a representation to the Union Textiles Minister, K.S. Rao, had highlighted the difficulties faced by the apparel industry in the last two years due to the fluctuating prices of cotton. “Sudden variation in the cotton prices has made the prices of yarn volatile,” the association president said.

Suggestions

Some of the suggestions put forward by the SIHMA, before the Textiles Minister, were fixation of reasonable rates for cotton growers and banning of any online sale of cotton sourced by Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) to the private traders.

Mr. Eswaran said fixing of rates for procurement of cotton from farmers in the coming 'cotton season' starting October should be done prior to the beginning of the arrivals depending on the various grades of cotton.

On the online trade, the hosiery manufacturers were of the view that CCI should refrain from such method of sale as the produce could end up in the hands of traders who are likely to hoard the stock till the prices increase.

“Cotton, if procured by private traders, can also get exported making the domestic apparel industry struggle.

Hence, CCI should directly sell the cotton only to 'real consumers' of cotton,” they said.

Direct sale

The direct sale of cotton to the textile industry would help the spinning mills in the sector to fix reasonable rate for yarn on a consistent basis.

Farmer kills self

Unable to clear debts, a farmer, K. Krishna (27), committed suicide by hanging himself. The incident took place at Alladurg in Medak district late on Saturday night. - Staff

Reporter Growing fodder grass on the terrace

First harvest within 10 weeks of planting



Innovative: The Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Kannur has developed a method to grow fodder grass on the terrace space of one's house.

Offering a solution to dairy farmers who grapple with space constraints, the Krishi Vigyan Kendra-Kannur (KVK) at Panniyur has developed an innovative method to grow fodder grass on the terrace space of one's house.

A recent experiment by T. Giggin, Assistant Professor at the KVK, is an answer to those who have wondered how they could procure grass to feed the bovines without venturing into far away grasslands or causing damage to forest areas. His experiment is on display on the terrace of the KVK.

The technique — high density double planting with micro-irrigation — involves growing fodder grass in the same 'grow-bags' used for cultivating vegetables.

The grass grows to a height of six feet in a span of two months, according to Dr. Giggin. "At KVK, grass is grown in around 300 bags, placed equidistantly, with a feet's space left in between the bags," he says, adding that water and manure are supplied using the technique of drip irrigation. The first harvest can be done after 10 weeks of planting and thereafter harvest can be done at regular intervals of 30 days, he says. One set of plantation can give yield for as many as eight times a year, Dr. Giggin says.

Varieties

Different varieties of grass are available for terrace cultivation. The varieties have been developed from selected Hybrid Napier varieties, named CO-3, and those selected and supplied from the Fodder Station of Thumburmuzhy. These are suitable for use in Kerala, says Dr. Giggin.

The innovation is attractive because of the financial gain it can give the farmers. A cow, which is usually given concentrate feed costing Rs.22 a kg, can easily be given 5 kg of grass at Rs.5 a kg.

“The rooted slips cost only Rs.2 a piece. The sale of these fodder grass stalks can also be taken up by farmers who wish to embark on their own ventures,” says K. Abdul Kareem, KVK’s programme co-ordinator. An investment of Rs.100 a month will produce fodder costing Rs.6,000 in six months’ time,” adds Dr. Giggin.

According to Dr. Kareem, programme coordinator of KVK, good variety grass will result in enhanced milk quality. Also, grass grows faster in this method as ample sunlight will be available. Moreover, the nagging problem of pests and weeds can also be ruled out. The KVK has initiated methods of paddy cultivation using the same process,” he adds
Loss from paddy, profit from rice

Vadakkencherry farmers brand organic produce, earn around Rs.30 more a kg

Paddy cultivators of Vadakkencherry Padasekhara Samithy, who had incurred huge losses by opting for organic farming, are now reaping profits by branding their produce. Farmers under the samithy had switched to organic cultivation during 2007-08 with support from the Agriculture Department and the grama panchayat. The samithy cultivated paddy organically in 18.24 hectares. The venture was initially backed by Poabs Group which introduced a buy-back scheme ensuring a premium price for the growers by exporting the rice. But following a ban on exports of non-basmati rice in October 2007, stocks piled up. Storage was proving to be expensive and cumbersome, said M.V. Resmi, Krishi Officer of Vadakkencherry Krishi Bhavan.

The farmers, who grew rice without pesticides and chemical fertilizers, were unable to sell the product in the domestic market. They were forced to sell the produce along with inorganically cultivated rice to Civil Supplies Corporation at the same rate, around Rs.18 a kg.

When the farmers found organic cultivation a losing business, the Department of Agriculture came to their rescue. It sanctioned a project stressing on the ‘safe-to-eat’ concept, thus facilitating a better price for organic rice through value addition. Instead of paddy, the farmers began to sell rice. The organic rice retains 60 per rice bran which is rich in dietary fibre. The recovery of rice from paddy is 65 per cent.

Last season, the farmers produced 40 tonne of organic Palakkadan Matta rice and marketed it under the brand name ‘Aswathy-Palakkadan Organic Red Rice’ in packets of 2 kg, 5 kg, and 10 kg. Each kilogram fetched them Rs.50.

The rice will be launched in the market by A.K. Balan, MLA, at a function in Vadakkencherry grama panchayat on July 1.

Solution in sight to farm labour shortage

When Jasmine applied for an agricultural training programme last month, she did not see herself riding a tractor or studying the inner workings of a tiller.

But on Saturday, the second day of the intensive 20 day training programme run by the Agriculture Department, she was comfortably driving one around the periphery of the Vengeri vegetable market aided by her two trainers.

“I have gone for training programmes before where they teach you about use of fertilisers and seeds. I expected such a class when I registered. But here on day one, they started with tractor driving lessons. Though I was scared in the beginning, now I have gained enough confidence. But I don’t think my family will approve of me driving a tractor,” says Jasmine (name changed) from the Koduvally block panchayat.

She is one of the 45 participants from three blocks in Kozhikode district who are being trained in almost every aspect of modern farming under the Agro Service Centre (ASC) Scheme launched in 2012 by the Agriculture Department.

The project being implemented in all districts with the assistance of the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) aims at tackling some major issues in the agriculture sector – the lack of experienced or trained hands for farm labour, absence of youth and diminishing returns.

“Three or four blocks are selected in each district to set up an Agro Service Centre. The 15 participants from each block who are trained here will take care of the running of the respective centres under the supervision of a retired agricultural officer. Farm equipments worth Rs. 45 lakhs will be supplied to each centre. Farmers can approach the centres to hire the equipment as well as the trained labour. These 15 will also train more people in the area,” says K.P. Preethi, Assistant Executive Engineer at the Agricultural Department.

For Biju Francis from Thiruvambady, the training here is a ticket to better returns from his labour.

“I have been working as a labourer in various farms over the past four years. The training here will equip me to even pluck coconuts. With the 14 others from the block, I feel we can make a difference once the centre is set up,” says Mr. Biju.

The participants for the programme were selected through an interview which tested their knowledge and aptitude as far as agriculture is concerned. The 15 from each block consists of 5 from an ITI background, 5 who have completed VHSE and 5 from a traditional farming background. But most of them are in one way or the other connected to agriculture. Five women from each of the blocks are participating.

In addition to the tractor, they are being trained to operate reaper, transplanter, combined harvester, the coconut plucking machine and the technicalities of soil testing.

Foodgrain production has declined, says IT Minister



S. R. Patil, Minister for Information Technology and Biotechnology, interacting with the students of University of Horticultural Sciences during the workshop on food processing in Bagalkot on Sunday.

S.R. Patil, Minister for Information Technology and Biotechnology and district in-charge, noted that foodgrain production had fallen by around 30 per cent, due to the non-implementation of food processing methods.

Speaking after inaugurating a workshop on the National Food Processing Campaign, organised by the district administration here on Sunday, he said the agricultural output could be enhanced substantially if modern methods in food processing were adopted.

He suggested constructing cold storage units in rural areas to protect produce from spoiling. Cold storage and food processing could help farmers get better prices for their produce, the Minister said.

Mr. Patil felt the farmers were already suffering owing to the “unscientific pricing of farm products.”

The Union government has initiated a campaign on food processing in order to provide better prices for horticultural, agricultural and dairy products and to prevent wastage of food, Mr. Patil said. The government has formulated numerous schemes in the food processing sector; people should make use of these schemes to increase their revenue. He said the horticultural sector could prove very lucrative, and urged the youth to involve themselves in the sector.

Vice-Chancellor of the Horticultural University S.B. Dandin said that regular training sessions should be held, and information centres set up, for farmers to impress upon them the significance of food processing.

Farmers undergo training on ‘sustainable sugarcane initiative’

Rajshree Sugars and Chemicals Ltd. recently conducted a three-day training programme on the ‘sustainable sugarcane initiative’ (SSI) for farmers at its unit located at Mundiambakkam near here.

As many as 100 farmers, registered with the company, underwent the training. Besides economising water usage, the SSI technique would also increase sugarcane yield.

Under the Pasumai Kudil scheme, the company gave away cash award of Rs. 25,000 each to those farmers who supplied seed for the SSI initiative and Rs. 7,200 each to 10 farmers who had taken up the sugarcane cultivation under the new technique.

The farmers were also taught the advantages of drip irrigation, management of drought situation, pest control and so on.

Associate Vice-President of the company Karthikeyan, Deputy General Managers S.J. Lakshmanan (Extension) and Sankaralingam (Sugarcane) and manager J. Rajendran (Sugarcane) participated.

Get sprinkler irrigation subsidy by July 15

It has been proposed to bring 250 acres of horticultural crops and 400 acres of agricultural crops under drip and sprinkler irrigation, said Collector T. Munusamy here at a conference on sprinkler irrigation organised under the aegis of the Department of Horticulture here on Friday.

To overcome acute water and labour shortage, farmers could pursue cost-effective cultivation through sprinkler and drip irrigation.

To encourage small and marginal farmers to take up drip irrigation, 100 per cent subsidy was provided to them.

Other farmers might avail a subsidy of up to 75 per cent Mr. Munusamy said.

Farmers seeking 100 per cent subsidy should submit tahsildhar's certificate categorising them as small and marginal farmers, computerised sitta, VAO-attested land draft, water and soil certificate, family card photocopy, passport size photograph of the farmer along with a duly filled-in application form addressed to the Assistant Director of Agriculture or Horticulture as the case may be on or before July 15.

Farmers may choose from among the dealers notified for each district for setting up sprinkler irrigation facility

Expedite Marudhayar project: farmers' forum

The project will irrigate substantial area and ensure drinking water to a number of villages'

The Tamilaga Vivasayigal Sangam has appealed to the State government to expedite the implementation of the Marudhayar reservoir project in Perambalur district.

Its State general secretary Rajachidambaram told *The Hindu* that all the agriculturists' associations in the district had welcomed the announcement of Chief Minister for the Rs.108-crore project which would not only irrigate a substantial area but also ensure drinking water to a number of villages.

Apart from complimenting the Chief Minister at the district agriculturists' grievances meeting, a rally was taken out under his leadership on May 11 and a meeting was presided over by C. Selladurai, district president of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, the same day.

While admitting that acquisition of some lands was inevitable in implementation of such projects, Mr. Rajachidambaram said "all that we want is that the livelihood of the farmers, whose lands would be acquired, should be ensured. For this, they should be given a compensation of Rs.5 lakh per acre apart from an equal extent of land. If the lands were to be acquired from those holding more than five acres, there is no necessity to give them land, and compensation alone would do," he added. As the stream which joined the Marudhayar passed through Pudunaduvalur, Nochiam, Vilamathur, Erayasamudrm, Kalpadi, Pangur and Kurumalapalayam to reach Kottarai, he pleaded that the stream should be desilted at least between Pangur and Kurumalapalayam. He refuted the reports that the project would harm the interests of the people of Ariyalur district, which was the contiguous region."

On the contrary it would be immensely beneficial as only a portion of the total quantum of water that flowed through this river was to be impounded at the reservoir at Kottarai while the rest could be utilised by the people of Ariyalur".

Mr. Rajachidambaram lamented while the preliminary works for the Marudhayar project were progressing at "snail's pace ", the works for the paper board unit project to be located in Manapparai taluk of Tiruchi district were going on at breakneck speed. "As the Marudhayar project would be immensely beneficial to the farming community, the State government should speed it up," he pleaded. He also expressed apprehension whether this project would also meet the fate of the Viswakudi reservoir scheme (also in Perambalur district) which had taken more than 12 years for completion.

Karur to get five new veterinary dispensaries with adequate staff

The State government is committed to increasing the revenue generation capacity of the rural populace by giving thrust to economic development-oriented programmes, Transport Minister V. Senthil Balaji said. Simultaneously, infrastructure for livestock welfare was being developed, he said.

The Minister was inaugurating new veterinary dispensaries at Kadavur and Kavalkaranpatti on Saturday.

Mr. Balaji said it had been planned to build five new veterinary dispensaries under the NABARD-funded Rural Infrastructure Development Fund scheme in Karur district. While those at Manalmedu, Andipattikottai, and Kosur had been opened, those at Kadavur and Kavalkaranpatti were opened on Saturday, the dispensary at Panikkampatti would be opened soon, he added. Each dispensary would have a compliment of one veterinary assistant surgeon, one livestock inspector, and two animal husbandry assistants, he said.

Besides, under the State government's free sheep and goat distribution scheme, it had been planned to cover 31 panchayats and 2,257 beneficiaries in Karur district during the current fiscal, Mr. Balaji said. Since April, 657 beneficiaries have been given free sheep and goats numbering 2,628.

To tide over the fodder scarcity, fodder depots would be opened in five places in the district. Farmers could get dry fodder at subsidised prices. District Collector S. Jayandhi, MLAs A. Pappa Sundaram (Kulithalai) and S. Kamaraj (Krishnarayapuram), and District Panchayat Chairperson Geetha Manivannan participated.

A revolting sight

With farmers bringing produce from Anandapuram, Sabbavaram, Padmanabham, Payakaraopeta, Paderu, Araku and Dumbriguda between 750 and 950 quintals a day, the garbage and vegetable waste generated at the Gopalapatnam Rytu Bazaar goes up to 2 quintals sometimes. Bovines have a field day inside as well as outside feeding on it. Inside the rytu bazaar some dustbins are strewn around. They were once used to make vermicompost. It was run for four years and it was nearly four years since the process stopped.

The contractor stopped making vermicompost because he could not get back his money. Even self-help groups are not showing interest, says the Ryot Bazar's Estate Officer Y.V. Muralikrishna. The farmers who run the stalls did not buy the organic manure produced by vermicompost because they found that produce from it was not rewarding in terms of quantity.

"On the other hand, when they use chemical fertilizers, they see growth in half the time and it saves the time and labour," he explains.

But with organic vegetables finding enthusiastic takers in the MVP Rytu Bazar, it is worth experimenting at Gopalapatnam too using the garbage generated. The garbage thrown outside is a sore sight and attracts bovines.

The garbage and vegetable waste generated at the Rytu Bazaar goes up to two quintals a day sometimes

Government draws flak on biotechnology regulatory bill

The speed with which the Government is trying to push the bill on Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India raises doubts whether it is to serve people or a few companies, speakers at a round table said.

Provisions of the bill make it appear in favour of multinational corporations in the business of manufacturing genetically modified crops.

Further, the bill is being piloted by the Department of Science and Technology and not Agriculture, giving scope for doubts about the motive of the proposed law, Narasimha Reddy of Chetana Society said.

India which is a signatory to the Convention on Biodiversity and the Cartagena Declaration on Bio Safety Regime is bringing in a law that allows a few corporates manufacturing seeds for genetically modified crops that are restrictive in nature, he lamented.

Worse there was no public discussion on the provisions of the bill that affects agriculture, the mainstay of majority of the population. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology had put up the draft bill on its website in English and had asked people to submit their objections by July 10.

This was restrictive as it was not available in Indian languages and it required online presence, he pointed out. He demanded that the Government first put in place a bio safety regime in place before taking up promotion of such restrictive laws.

It was unfortunate that the Government was not giving as much priority to public issues like Lok Pal Bill or quota for women in legislatures bill as much as it is giving this bill which serves the interests of a few, former Union secretary EAS Sarma said. Such laws should be discussed threadbare among general public and opinions taken from people at gram sabhas organised for the purpose, he demanded.

The restrictive regime of Biotechnology Regulatory Authority would kill the traditional methods of farmers using their own seeds. It would appear that the Government had become a broker for corporate interests, he lamented.

PV Ramana of Privatikarana Vyatirekha Porata Samiti, Professor of Geology G Krishna Rao, Sreeram Murthy of APCLC,

Telugu Rythu general secretary Nallamala Venkateswara Rao, Murthy of Green Pals Club and Indraja of Green Youth Brigade participated.

Privatisation of water resources opposed

Ramon Magsaysay Award winner and water activist Rajendra Singh on Sunday opposed privatisation of water resources.

Participating in a seminar, he said that taking control over water resources at the grassroots level was the only solution to solve the water scarcity.

Governments were creating rift among the farmers by envisaging plans of river diversion, he said.

He said that life had improved in areas where Tarun Bharat Sangh — an NGO headed by him — sangh was active. People, who were working as daily labourers in cities, returned to villages and took agriculture. Now, they were leading contented life. Literacy level and health condition had improved significantly.

Kharif sowing: 23 lakh hectares covered so far

All the four regions in the State have received excess rainfall

With southwest monsoon covering the entire State, kharif sowing has picked up pace. Area covered under kharif crops — rice, pulses, coarse cereals and commercial crops

— is 23 lakh hectares as on June 24, which is 31 per cent of the target of 74.29 lakh hectares. During the corresponding period last year only 10.95 lakh hectares of the target area was covered.

The State received 214.7 mm rainfall in June against the normal 194.7 mm. All the four regions — south interior Karnataka, north interior Karnataka, coastal and Malnad — have received excess rainfall.

Sowing of cereals — rice, jowar, maize, bazra and minor millets — has been completed in 9 lakh hectares, constituting 25 per cent of the target of 35.06 lakh hectares. The coverage during the corresponding period was a meagre 2.19 lakh hectares.

The early arrival of monsoon has given a fillip to farmers cultivating paddy and sowing has begun well ahead of schedule this time, according to officials in the Agriculture Department.

Maize has been sown in 5.6 lakh hectares, covering 47 per cent of the target of 11.92 lakh hectares. The coverage was 10 per cent during the corresponding period last year. Among pulses, the coverage of green gram was 2.03 lakh hectares while that of black gram was 0.45 lakh hectares. So far, pulses have been sown in 4.5 lakh hectares, covering 26 per cent of the target of 15.87 lakh hectares.

Oilseeds have been sown in 3.17 lakh hectares, constituting 25 per cent of the target of 12.82 lakh hectares. Groundnut's acreage stood at 0.89 lakh hectares followed soya bean — 1.39 lakh hectares and sunflower — 0.49 lakh hectares.

Commercial crops

So far, commercial crops have been cultivated on 6.66 lakh hectares against the target of 10.55 lakh hectares. Sugarcane's acreage is 3.49 lakh hectares, while that of cotton is 2.26 lakh hectares and tobacco is 0.92 lakh hectares.

Research

Let us have a quick look at some of the completed and ongoing research programmes, which offers an indication of the nature of work handled.

Prevalence of cardiovascular disease risk factors in industrial workers.

Prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections and associated risk factors among wives of truck drivers.

Concessions for agriculture sought in Article 371(J)

The agitation for special status to Hyderabad Karnataka seems to be losing its direction, considering the addition of several demands outside the purview of Article 371 (J).

Before Visit

The demand for inclusion of many other benefits under the provisions of the article 371 (J) of the constitution has grown shriller in anticipation of the visit of the Cabinet Subcommittee led by Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister H.K. Patil here on Monday.

The subcommittee, formed to finalise the rules and fix the quantum of reservation in education and employment, would hear pleas, suggestions and opinions from social organisations and the general public from Gulbarga, Bidar and Yadgir districts.

Currently, Article 371 (J) clearly states that the HK region would receive special reservation in employment in the State government sector and education.

It also provides for the constitution of a statutory development board which will take up region-specific developmental works.

Fresh demand

However, a fresh demand for giving prime importance to agriculture has cropped up from the Kayaka Jeevigala Okkuta, a federation of different social organisations. These organisations want special concessions for agricultural development to be included under Article 371 (J).

Leaders of the okkuta, who met here on Sunday, said the government should give importance to the agriculture sector, such as declaring red gram a special crop and providing concessions to red gram growers.

They also wanted the ban on export of red gram to be lifted immediately.

According to them, special status to Hyderabad Karnataka should not confine itself to simply extending reservation in employment and education; it should be extended to other fields to achieve the overall objective: the development of Hyderabad Karnataka.

However, according to legal experts, the State does not have the power to authorise such benefits — this would require Parliamentary approval and the President's assent.

Village takes up tuber crop conservation

60 varieties of tubers in the region to be conserved



Edavaka in Wayanad, the first grama panchayat in Kerala to prepare a biodiversity register, has taken up a novel initiative for the conservation of the rich diversity of tuber crops in the region.

The two-year programme, launched with funding from the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB), will be implemented through the Biodiversity Management Committee of the panchayat. It seeks to conserve the 60 varieties of tubers found in the region.

The panchayat has taken up organic cultivation of tubers on 1.73 acres of public land on the slopes of a hill, with labour provided by workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. As many as three homestead farms and four schools in the panchayat are also growing tubers to support the participatory programme.

A massive awareness campaign has been launched with the help of the local community radio named Maattoli and a community newspaper Naattuvettam. A school-level campaign targeting students has also been taken up. The Ferns naturalist society based at Mananthavady is extending technical support to the project.

Panchayat president H.B. Pradeep said the programme was aimed at conserving biodiversity and promoting tubers as a rich source of affordable food. "Over the years, many tubers have disappeared from the common man's diet because of lifestyle changes. This has contributed to nutritional deficiency, especially among tribal

communities. A few of the local tubers are also known to have medicinal properties. By encouraging people to include tubers in their diet, we hope to revive local health traditions.”

Oommen V. Oommen, chairman, KSBB, said the programme would try to conserve all the 60 varieties of tubers recorded in the Edavaka panchayat biodiversity register, including the wild ones and the types cultivated solely by the tribal communities. He said efforts were on to multiply and propagate the tubers. The Edavaka panchayat is home to 20 varieties of arrowroot tubers and as many types of yams and wild tubers.

The project also envisages the conservation of medicinal plants in the panchayat.

K.P. Laladhas, member secretary, KSBB said the germ plasm collected for the tuber conservation programme would be stored for long-term use. Tubers, he said, could be preserved for long periods in fields. “Storing such resources in the ecosystem will help to create a food reserve.” He stressed the need to educate the public about the need to enhance the diversity of the food basket and reduce the dependence on rice and wheat. The KSBB has committed an assistance of Rs.5 lakh for the project.

‘Agricultural scientists should not serve corporate interests’

Agricultural scientists should address the real issues facing the farm sector instead of serving corporate interests, Devinder Sharma, food and agricultural policy analyst, has said.

Delivering a lecture on ‘Agricultural policy and environment’, organised by the Centre of Excellence in Environmental Economics (CEEE) of the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) here on Saturday, he said that a new culture of farming, which did not harm the environment and ruin rural economy, was the need of the hour.

“About 10 million acres in Khammam district of Andhra Pradesh has been declared a non-pesticide zone. Productivity has gone up in such places. Still, proponents of high-tech farming are luring farmers to their trap. Corporate giants are set to take over the farm sector. They have the support of rich regimes in the world because those governments need foodgrains but have no land to produce them. Countries of the Middle East have begun to grow food crops in leased land in Asia and Africa,” he said. He criticised the undue use of pesticides in the post-Green Revolution era.

Care for some monsooned coffee?



— PHOTO: Renuka Phadnis Coffee beans exposed to the humid monsoon weather in a factory in Mangalore to produce 'Monsooned Malabar.' Photo: Renuka Phadnis

'Monsooned Malabar' has a loyal following in the U.S. & Europe

The coffee industry everywhere is seasonal and shut during the monsoons but a handful of units in Mangalore get busy now. The onset of the monsoon means it is time for processing the celebrated 'Monsooned Malabar,' the coffee sought the world over for its unique chocolatey and musty taste, said to originate from the exposure of the beans to the moisture-laden monsoon winds blowing in from the Arabian Sea.

M. Suman Ram, senior manager, Aspinwall and Co. Ltd., a company which claims is the pioneer of the 'Monsooned Malabar,' is processing 3,500 tonnes of coffee this year. He told *The Hindu* that the coffee is from "upcountry, Chikmagalur, Hassan and Kodagu. For Monsooned Malabar, it is Arabica only."

At its factory, the beans are scattered, left open to the elements ("monsooned"), packed and exported to countries where buyers roast it for use in blends. Some buyers of Mangalore's 'Monsooned Malabar' are Nestle Nespresso in Belgium, Benecke Coffee in Germany, Grecof and Blaser Trading, both in Switzerland, besides one buyer from India.

The coffee is scattered on the floor to absorb the moisture from the humid air. Once a day, for the next week to 10 days, the coffee beans are turned over with wooden rakes. Next, the scattered coffee is kept in "wind rows", which are jute sacks filled with coffee stored in lines with a passage for the monsoon wind to blow through. During that time,

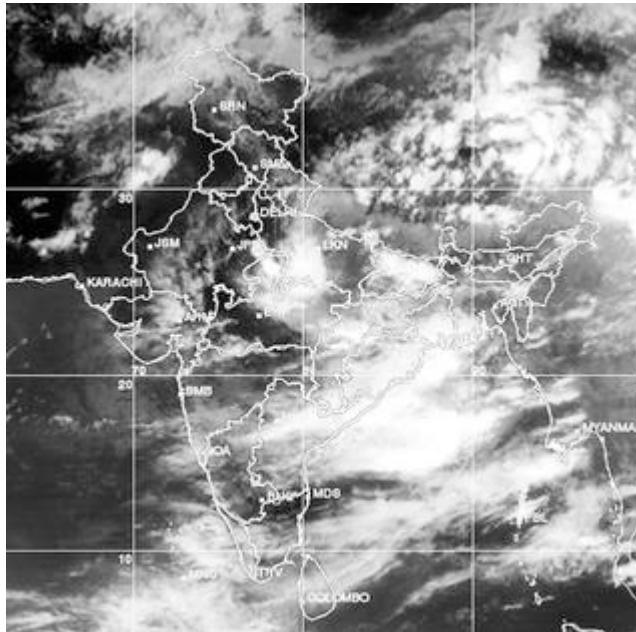
the next batch of coffee is put on the floor. Each batch goes through this process three times.

When the factory opens for the regular workers after the monsoons, the monsooned coffee is sent to the machine room where it is “polished” (the outer skin is removed) and graded. After the grading, it is manually sorted to remove defects, bulked, fumigated, packed and exported, mainly to the U.S., Europe and China. The company exports 3,000 tonnes of which 80 per cent goes to Germany and Italy, 10 per cent to the U.S. and the rest to other countries.

Tracing its origin, he related how coffee beans would go from Mangalore to Europe in wooden boats without a motor. Through the six to eight-month voyage on the high seas, the coffee beans absorbed the moisture, bloated and turned brown from green on reaching the destination. When the motorised liners came, the journey took 20 days, cutting short the time of exposure of the coffee beans to the sea winds. People asked for the old coffee, which they thought tasted better. That is how the weathering process came to be simulated on land, though with little success. Some tried it with artificial showers, which spoiled the coffee. “They tried in Hassan, it didn’t work,” he said.

The company has stiff competition from others who have taken up godowns in Mangalore to make the feted coffee bean. “There are a lot of parties (five to six) now,” he said. Another challenge is keeping the beans free of weevils.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on June 30th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	40	28	0	154
New Delhi (Sfd)	40	25	4	119

Chandigarh	33	24	25	275
Hissar	40	26	0	101
Bhuntar	33	19	1	137
Shimla	24	16	29	320
Jammu	35	26	1	101
Srinagar	26	18	1	53
Amritsar	37	25	2	139
Patiala	37	25	1	145
Jaipur	37	29	0	163
Udaipur	32	27	0	93
Allahabad	31	24	61	308
Lucknow	33	21	49	284
Varanasi	30	24	51	194
Dehradun	31	22	24	1095
Agartala	30	26	4	397
Ahmedabad	36	26	0	103
Bangalore	28	20	0	173
Bhubaneshwar	31	26	1	294
Bhopal	31	24	0	459
Chennai	36	24	9	164
Guwahati	34	25	9	300
Hyderabad	31	23	1	203
Kolkata	31	25	82	397
Mumbai	31	26	6	955
Nagpur	32	25	0	457
Patna	31	26	11	123
Pune	28	22	3	297
Thiruvananthapuram	33	24	0	499
Imphal	31	23	21	128
Shillong	25	19	3	377

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

HEAT WAVE

Southwest Monsoon has been vigorous in east Uttar Pradesh and active in west Uttar Pradesh. The axis of Monsoon trough on MSL passes through Amritsar, Patiala, Meerut, Hardoi, centre of low pressure area and thence southeast wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over east Uttar Pradesh, at many places over Punjab and west Uttar Pradesh, at a few places over Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (3 cm and above) HARYANA:

Naraingarh 7, Ambala 4 and Chandigarh and Indri 3 each, HIMACHAL PRADESH: Shimla 3, PUNJAB: Barnala, Mukerian, Kapurthala and Phagwara 3 each, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: (7 cm and above) BASTI 19, Bansaon 18, Mukhlispur, Khalilabad and Kanpur Airport 17 each, Sidhauri 16, Kakrahi 15, Regoli 14, Ankinghat 12, Bansi, Laharpur and Banda 11 each, Balrampur, Kanpur tehsil and Bhatpurwaghat 9 each, Karwi, Utarala and Safipur 8 each and Ghatampur, Kheri Lakhimpur, Chanderdeepghat, Sultanpur and Biswan 7 each, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Hamirpur 13, Mahoba and Shahjahanpur 9 each, Rath 6, Kalpi 5, Orai 4 and Aligarh and Bareilly 3 each and UTTARAKHAND: Chamoli and Joshimath 3 each.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 02nd July 2013: Rain/thundershowers would occur at most places over east Uttar Pradesh, at many places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and west Uttar Pradesh and at a few places over rest of the region outside west Rajasthan where it would be at one or two places.

HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING: Heavy to very heavy rainfall would occur at a few places over east Uttar Pradesh during next 48 hours. Heavy rainfall would occur at one or two places Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during next 48 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 2nd July 2013: Generally cloudy sky. Light rain/thundershowers may occur in some areas



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Rain revives hopes of good harvest in Garhwa

After a long hiatus, rain lashed the city for the last two days, bringing back the smiles on the faces of farmers, who had lost all hopes of a good crop this year.

Aslam Ansari, a farmer said, "If the trend of monsoon continues like this, we will have a good harvest this year." Ranka resident Jitendra Mehta, who is an agriculturist, echoed similar sentiments. "Cultivation of crops will get a boost this year if it rain like this throughout the season," he said.

Scientists of local Krishi Vigyan Kendra too have predicted a good prospect of crops this year. Farmers have been asked to adopt the system of rice intensification (SRI) method in cultivation of paddy so that it can be grown on a large scale, said district agriculture officer Arun Kumar Singh. Garhwa recorded 101.4mm during the last two days. "The district will continue to receive good rainfall in the coming days", said a Met department official.

Rain brought in its wake a host of problems as well. Continuous rain since Saturday has

caused waterlogging in many low-lying areas. Drains being clogged, rain inundated several parts of the town. The dilapidated Garhwa main road was the worst-hit. Waterlogged roads have created bottlenecks at various places on national highway 75, which connects Garhwa with Palamu.

United States finds pesticide residue in basmati, exports plunge
Basmati rice exports to the US have plunged because many Indian firms are under an import alert by the US authorities, leading to a detailed scrutiny for pesticide residue in every grain being shipped out. This has raised costs, upset schedules and obstructed sales, prompting exporters to seek government intervention.

In the first quarter of calendar year 2013, exports were down to 19,583 tonne. With 31 Indian rice firms under US FDA import alert amid 100% scrutiny, the rice export lobby feels that the US is employing a virtual zero-tolerance policy on Indian pesticides that have been used around the world for years and raised no health concerns. US diplomatic officials say they have discovered residues of chemicals not approved for use in the US in Indian basmati rice and such shipments have been rejected.

Indian companies see the US market as a strong branded market which sets benchmark prices and want the government to take up the issue with its US counterpart. "Exporters are very concerned about the US law and policy on the presence of residues of particular pesticides in rice," said Rajan Sundaresan, president, All India Rice Exporters Association.

He added that without having conducted a risk assessment, the US was raising questions on pesticides that have been tested recently by other WTO members and the Codex Alimentarius (established by FAO and WHO, the agency develops international food standards), leading them to adopt minimum residue limits (MRLs) that are considerably higher than the US limit.

Four pesticides, namely Buprofezin, Carbendazim, Isoprothiolane and Tricyclazole that are commonly used by Indian farmers, have been found to be present at extremely low levels in the shipments, said Sundaresan.

"Many of the US' trading partners like Japan and the EU and Codex have conducted risk assessments and set MRLs for these pesticides. The levels set by those MRLs do not act as a barrier to trade because the residues are comfortably below them. Meanwhile, the levels of pesticides the US authorities have detected have been far, far below these thresholds," said Sundaresan. India annually exports 2.5-3 million tonne

basmati rice, with Iran and the West Asia the biggest market.

Basmati rice exports from India to the United States have increased from 55,762 tonne in 2009 to a record 104,400 tonne in 2012. "In the previous year, Indian rice exports to the United States hit an all-time record of \$140 million. We would like to continue working with Indian exporters," said a USA diplomatic official in New Delhi

After arrears, floods crush cane farmers in UP

Heavy floods in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have hit the cane farmers, already facing problems because of non-payment of their dues by sugar mills. The sugarcane fields are inundated with flood water which may damage the crop.

According to conservative estimates, around 1lakh hectares of cane fields are either inundated or have been damaged because of erosion. "It is a most pathetic situation for cane growers in UP," said convener of Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan, VM Singh, speaking to TOI.

Singh said sugarcane fields lie in low lands which are now flooded by the rivers not only in west UP but also in the central and eastern parts. Rivers like Rapti and Ghagra are already flowing above the danger mark with no sign of receding given the heavy rains in the coming days and release of flood water from Uttarakhand.

"The government needs to think of cane farmers," said Singh, adding that cane growers were nowhere on priority. "In the last four months, cane arrears have mounted to the tune of over Rs 4,500 crore, a major part of the arrears due on private sugar mills. Government sugar mills have not paid dues to the tune of Rs 500 crore, he said.

In fact as the 2012-13 sugarcane crushing season rounded off in Uttar Pradesh, the total dues to farmers have exceeded the state government estimates set last year. Against the Rs 21,500 crore pegged for the current season, the dues breached Rs 22,402 crore, about 4.2% higher.

The main factor behind higher payments is the rise of 17% in the state price, known as State Advised Price (SAP), which is Rs 280/quintal for common variety vis-a-vis Rs 240/quintal on previous year. Prices for early and rejected/unsuitable varieties of cane had been hiked to Rs 290/quintal and Rs 275/quintal compared to Rs 250/quintal and Rs 235/quintal, respectively on December 7, 2012.

VM Singh, who had petitioned the high court in April, had prayed for immediate settlement of dues, 15% interest payment over delay and relief to farmers on their agricultural loans until their dues were paid by mills.

UP Sugar Mills Association has been urging the state to provide relief with regards to the mounting arrears. But, the Akhilesh government has yet to decide while millers remain sanguine.

Experts said that the vast average of sugar cane field inundated by flood waters would only dampen the prospects of cane growers who are desperately waiting for payment. "They have no means of livelihood and are left at the mercy of the government," Singh said.

The situation coincides with the high court observation asking state government strictly to release the payment as soon as possible. On June 26, the Lucknow bench of Allahabad high court directed the principal secretary (cane) and the cane commissioner to appear in person before the court by June 4 and apprise it about reason for delay and plan of action.

Government sources, meanwhile, said, the state government was contemplating issue of recovery challans on cane mills who have been defaulting on payment to farmers. The sugarcane lobby, on the other hand, has been seeking reprieve saying while the prices of sugarcane have been fixed by the state government, those of sugar have been fluctuating

Centre to push for passage of food bill, says Anwar

The Centre on Sunday exuded confidence that the much hyped Food Security Bill would definitely come up for discussion in the monsoon session of Parliament. Speaking to reporters here on Sunday, Tariq Anwar, Union minister of state for agriculture and food processing said, "Every effort has been made by the UPA government to pass the all-important bill, but the bill could not be passed, due to disruption of Parliament by members of the Bharatiya Janata Party. This time, however, we will use our strength to ensure the bill is passed." On BJP's assertion that the Centre's bill is mere replication of the existing food security schemes in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Anwar said the party was free to express its opinion on the said bill in Parliament.

When asked to comment on the current state of affairs of Uttar Pradesh, Anwar said, "Development in any state directly depends on infrastructure, availability of electricity and law and order. All three seem to be missing in UP. Mulayam Singh Yadav has already expressed his displeasure, so it is not appropriate for me to comment."

The minister who arrived in Lucknow on Saturday also visited the Central Sub-Tropical Horticulture Research Institute, Rehmankhera and interacted with scientists. He said,

"UP has immense potential as far horticulture is concerned. He added that since mango constitutes 40% of country's fruit export, steps should be taken to augment exports. "This will strengthen economy of the country, as well as of the mango farmers," the minister said and added that efforts were being made to use all parts of mango including its seed for processed wood. He also stressed on ensuring proper marketing for various mango by-products.

Commenting on absence of fruit-based food processing units in Uttar Pradesh, Anwar said, "the ministry encourages private initiative in the form of subsidy and other benefits. A fruit-based food processing unit will enhance the export tally and enable farmers for value addition."

He also said that as per the demands of orchard owners for rail transport of mangoes to Delhi and Mumbai from Lucknow, he will have a talk with the Railway minister.

The senior NCP leader also said that the Centre was studying the Muslim reservation model prevalent in the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and is committed to implement the recommendations of Sachar Committee and Rangnath Mishra Commission.

On the question of Muslim reservation getting disrupted repeatedly, he said, "These issues require constitutional amendments, which is only possible with a clear 2/3⁺ majority."

DONE/365

The Nationalist Congress Party in the next Lok Sabha elections would not field any candidate from Congress strongholds of Amethi and Rae Bareli, said Tariq Anwar, Union minister of state for agriculture and food processing, also a senior leader of the NCP. He added his party would remain integral part of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance, and said, "NCP and Congress had friendly fights during elections to different state assemblies such as Kerala, Lakshadweep and the north-eastern states. If NCP and Congress will hopefully reach a pre-poll agreement on UP. In case an agreement cannot be worked out, NCP would contest as a national party."

He stated further that it would not be possible for the NCP to contest on all 80 seats in UP and it was for the party's state unit to decide on candidates with respect to constituencies. "Our alignment with the Congress is on a state-to-state basis, and our agenda is to strengthen secularism," said Anwar.

Taking a dig at Narendra Modi, the Union minister said, "Modi is hardly a challenge to us, as since his elevation to national level, he has become a problem for the BJP itself." Anwar refused categorically chances of his party extending support to the NDA, saying, "We have no political ties with the BJP."

Anwar admitted that despite political differences with Janata Dal (United), UPA will be strengthened if Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar joins hand with the UPA. "After all, Nitish was able to win vote of confidence in Bihar assembly with Congress support," he said, adding "Political stability in the country is impossible without the role of two national parties. The third front has always failed."

He said corruption and price rise would not be an issue in the general elections. "No political party can claim it is free from corruption. Strong laws are needed to tackle it and some steps have already been taken," he said. "As far as price rise is concerned, most of it is attributed to the import of oil and gas, the cost of which is dependent on global markets. To a great extent, we have been able to convey this notion to the public," the minister observed.

Need for livestock extension councils: Experts

During a national meeting of all the state veterinary councils (SVCs) in city, many chiefs of councils from different states called for setting up of extension councils for improving the knowledge among field vets, academicians and farmers.

Dr V Chandrashekara Reddy, president of Karnataka Veterinary Council, said that these councils should be tailor-made for specific locations and target groups for development of animal husbandry. Extension programmes should focus on value chain development. He also called for reforming the linkages between various institutions engaged in improving livestock efficiency and productivity.

Reddy said that these councils should promote producers organisations to facilitate a platform for various stakeholders as this would improve both productivity and profitability. Effective livestock extension for field vets should include strengthening of their skills and knowledge, and establishing strong linkages with farmers as well as research units.

The extension policy should include synchronized extension services and a decentralised participatory approach. It should also promote innovative platforms and creating small producer hubs in rural areas.

We will get Food Security Bill passed on our strength: Tariq Anwar

The Centre on Sunday exuded confidence that the much hyped Food Security Bill would definitely see the light of the day in the monsoon session of the Parliament. Speaking to TOI, minister of state for agriculture and food processing Tariq Anwar said, "Every effort

has been made by the UPA government to pass the all-important bill, but the bill could not be passed, due to disruptions of the Parliament by the Bharatiya Janata Party. However, this time, we will get the bill passed using our strength."

On the question that BJP feels that the Centre's bill is only a replication of the existing food security schemes in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Tariq Anwar said that whatever is their opinion on the said bill should be raised inside the Parliament.

The minister who is also a senior leader of Nationalist Congress Party said that in the coming Lok Sabha elections, the party would not be putting any candidate from the Congress strongholds of Amethi and Rae Bareilly. He also reiterated that NCP would remain an integral part of the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance, and said, "The NCP and Congress had friendly fights during elections to different state assemblies such as Kerala, Lakshadweep and the north-eastern states. If NCP and Congress are able to reach at a pre-poll agreement in UP, then it will be good. And in case, the agreement could not be worked out, NCP would contest as a national party.

"He further stated that it would not be possible for the NCP to contest on all the 80 seats in UP, while leaving the decision on the party's state unit to decide the candidates and their respective constituencies. "Our alignment with the Congress is on a state-to-state basis, and our prime agenda is to strengthen the secular forces in the country," Anwar said.

Taking a dig at Narendra Modi, the Union minister said, "Modi would be least dangerous for us, as after his elevation into the national level, he has virtually become a problem for the BJP itself, and internal bickering in the party had become evident." Anwar also categorically refused to extend any support to the NDA, even if NCP is in a king maker's position, and said, "We have no political ties with the BJP." On Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar parting ways with the NDA, Anwar said that the onus is on Nitish to align with the secular forces of the country or not. He also admitted that despite political difference with Janata Dal (United), UPA will be strengthened if Nitish joins hand with the UPA.

"Nitish was able to win the vote of confidence in Bihar assembly after it got support of the Congress," the senior NCP leader further added. Ruling out the relevance of third front, the union minister said, "Political stability in the country is impossible without the two national parties. And every time the third front has failed, after being formed." Anwar also said that corruption and price rise would not be any issue in the coming Lok Sabha elections. "No political party can claim that it is free from stains of corruption. The issue of corruption is serious, strong laws are needed to tackle it and some steps have

already been taken," he said.

As far as price rise is concerned, most of it is attributed to the import of oil and gas, the cost of which is dependent on the global markets.

"I feel to great extent, we have been able to convey this notion to the public, and they too have understood it," the minister observed. When asked to comment on the current state of affairs of Uttar Pradesh, Anwar said, "Development in any state directly depends on infrastructure, availability of electricity and law & order. All the three entities seem to be missing in UP. And when Mulayam Singh Yadav has already expressed his displeasure and commented over it, it is not appropriate for me to comment on it."

The senior NCP leader also said that the Centre is studying the Muslim reservation model prevalent in the states of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, and is committed to implement the recommendations of Sachar Committee and Rangnath Mishra Commission. On the question that reservation to Muslims gets repeatedly disrupted, he said, "These issues require constitutional amendments, which is only possible with clear 2/3rd majority.

"The minister who arrived in Lucknow on Saturday also visited the Central Sub-Tropical Horticulture Research Institute, Rehmankhara and interacted with the scientists. He said, "UP has immense potential as far horticulture is concerned. He also said that since mango constitutes 40% of country fruit export, steps should be taken to augment exports.

"This will strengthen the economy of the country, as well as that of the farmers, who are involved in growing mangoes," the Union MoS said, and added that efforts are being made to use all the parts of mango such as its seed for processed wood. He also stressed on ensuring proper marketing for the various by-products of mango.

Commenting on the absence of mango-based or any fruit-based food processing units in Uttar Pradesh, Anwar said, "The ministry would encourage private initiative in this regard in form of subsidy and other benefits. A fruit-based food processing unit will not only enhance the export tally, but will enable the farmers to improve themselves through value addition." He also said that as per the demands of the mango growers to provide a rail transport for mangoes to Delhi and Mumbai from Lucknow, he will have a talk with the Railway minister.

Work in harmony with nature: Suresh Prabhu

With floods in Uttarakhand reminding the country of the devastation that can be caused by environmental destruction, a realisation that economic development should not come at the cost of adverse ecological impact seems to be slowly dawning.

Delivering the keynote address at the 105th Goa chamber of commerce and industry (Gannualgeneral meeting on Saturday, Suresh Prabhu, former Union minister for environment and forests, observed that ecology should not be endangered in a manner that would lead to such tragedies.

"All crisis are man-made... Nature won't change course. We need to understand how nature operates. We must find a solution to work in harmony with nature," he cautioned.

Prabhu noted that land use change leads to climate change that can contribute to such natural calamities. "When you change the intended use of land from what nature intended, it is a land use change," he said while adding that mining contributes to land use change as it usually involves forest areas.

Prabhu — who has also held the power and industry portfolios in the Union government — also said that there was a need to find a balance between ecology and development. "All economic development in the world is from use of natural resources," he observed. "We cannot say no to everything and yes to everything," he warned but said the community living in mining areas should also benefit from mining, not just society at large.

"India is importing 100 million tonnes of coal, and 80% of the oil requirements," he stated while stressing on the need to diversify the country's energy basket and change the energy profile.

He also said India's profile of GDP was flawed with services contributing around 62%, manufacturing contributing 17% and agriculture steadily going down. He also stated that the country needs to seriously think of how to control population growth.

B V Wanchoo, Governor of Goa, said technological and industrial growth should address various issues facing society. He lamented that integrity was taking a backseat in the race for quick profits and said there was a need to plan for long term progress. Wanchoo said the state should "treat stoppage of mining activities not as a problem but an opportunity to think of new avenues."

He also said the government needs to make a rational analysis if Goa will have carrying capacity for the increasing number of tourists and mooted hinterland tourism claiming

that it will add to variety in the tourism sector. With more land coming under development, the land to man ratio is steadily decreasing, he added.

Wanchoo also said there was scope and need for improvement on the education front as well as the IT and electronics industry in the state.

Manguirish Pai Raikar, GCCI president, criticised self styled NGOs for opposing all projects, as mega projects. He said certain people were opposing the Mopa airport for political gains.

What steps should the government take to arrest the rise in prices of vegetables and fruits?

As we don't have a lot of vegetables growing in our state, we are more dependent on imports from Belgaum and Kolhapur. Transportation costs and middlemen increase the prices of these perishables. The state authorities should encourage youth to take up agriculture by providing them with subsidies, grants and loans. Also, the concept of the middleman needs to be eliminated so that the goods are bought directly from the farmers.

Anant Agni

Teacher, Canacona

When the government has increased the stamp duty manifold, how can we expect the agriculturists to keep control over prices of fruits and vegetables? After December 19, 1961, the government completely destroyed farming activity. This has to be revived if prices of fruits and vegetables have to come down. If we produce more locally, we will not have to depend on supplies from other states.

Manuel Caldeira

Political engineer, Moira

We have to encourage locals to grow more fruits and vegetables including kitchen gardens. This will give a boost to production and make the produce cheaper. Besides this, local produce will be nutritious, fresh and healthy. This will reduce dependence on neighbouring states.

Aruna Naik

Retired government employee, Porvorim

It is difficult for government to keep a check on the rise in prices of fruits and vegetables as the commodities are not held in public stocks. The government, however, can curb the role of middlemen by monitoring the prices of these commodities in the entire state so that prices remain equal across the state. The damage to these crops in the monsoon can be prevented by better transportation and packing to keep the prices low. Lastly, there is the need of increasing agricultural productivity in the state by

encouraging local farmers to opt for horticultural crops, so that local supply is enhanced and dependence on other states for availing crops is reduced.

Shilpa Singh

Assistant professor, Panaji

Flood losses in Kinnaur may be much higher than estimated

About 90% cash crops, especially apple, has been damaged in the rain-ravaged Kinnaur district, even as government has para-dropped horticulture experts in the region to help restore damaged apple trees and bring them to original shape and size, using various horticulture techniques. The damage caused to public and private property was initially estimated at over Rs2,500 crore, but now the government has said that the actual loss could be much higher.

With apple crop damaged, Kinnaur residents have suffered huge losses, it being the major source of their income, while consumers of metropolitan cities will miss the popular apple varieties of snowbound tribal district during the current apple season, sources said. It was for the first time in the history of Kinnaur district that the area experienced snowfall in June. The entire area experienced heavy snowfall and rainfall continuously for 72 hours from June 15 to 17.

Chief minister Virbhadra Singh said that detailed estimate of flash flood-loss would be assessed after normal life is restored in the entire area. He said that loss to public and private property could be much higher in the state than the preliminary estimate of around Rs 2,575 crore made by the state government. Revenue officials would soon conduct a detailed survey of loss of property, he said.

Restoration of electricity, water supply and other essential services is being done on war footing, he said, adding that and these would be fully restored in a month's time.

Out of total 42 roads blocked in the district, over a dozen have been opened so far while power supply and communication lines too has not been restored completely in the district. As floods and landslides have caused huge damage to water supply lines, their restoration too has become a challenge for the government to ensure safe drinking water to people, sources said.

According to officials, 70 water supply schemes, out of 74, have been restored in Peo division and 20 such schemes have been restored in Pooh subdivision of Kinnaur district. "All water supply schemes in the tribal district of Kinnaur would be restored within 8-10 days," said chief secretary Sudripta Roy.

Electricity supply has been restored upto Moorang and telecommunication system was now working in the main stations in Reckong Peo, Sangla and Pooh, Roy said. Four satellite phones have been provided to the district administration so that relief and rescue operations could be carried out smoothly, he said.

The CS said that work of restoration of PWD roads was in progress and 13 link roads had been cleared so far and it was expected that link roads in Kinnaur district would be restored by a week or so. To provide relief to houseless people, 30 tents and 400 sleeping bags had been sent to Peo. Besides, 1,000 blankets and 500 tarpaulins had been arranged through Shimla deputy commissioner, which were being sent to Kinnaur, he said.

All-weather connectivity

The Himachal Pradesh government would soon take up the issue of ensuring all-weather connectivity in Kinnaur district with the Union government. Chief secretary Sudripta Roy said that the state government would also take up the issue of developing the old Hindustan-Tibet Road as all-weather road with Central government. The state had already developed various road stretches starting from Tapri to Reckong Peo of old Hindustan-Tibet road connecting Reckong Peo right upto Shiaso in Sunnam valley near Pooh, he added.

Jalna farmer bags national award for innovation

A farmer's innovative idea and planning to keep his village out of the grip of severe drought has won him a national award. Uddhav Khedekar from Shivni village in Jalna district has been selected for the national Jagjivan Ram Innovative Farmer Award 2012, sponsored by Indian Council of Agriculture Research(ICAR).

The award ceremony will be held on July 16, 2013 in New Delhi. Khedekar will receive the award in the form of a citation and award money of Rs 1 lakh. Khedekar, also a recipient of Sahayadri Bhushan award for water management, has set up his village as a role model by introducing efficient water management in its periphery. People's participation in Shivni village not only helped them sail through the drought condition but also ensure production of kharif and rabi crops.

Marathwada region received less than 50% rainfall last year, with Jalna, Osmanabad and Aurangabad districts declared as the drought affected. Jalna is located around 105 km from Aurangabad. Shivni village, spread over 386 hectares, has a population of 750. The village has a catchment area of 668 sq km and receives only about 200 mm rainfall

annually.

"The village began facing water crisis a few years ago and became dependent on tankers. But in 2000, the villagers initiated a campaign that yielded results from 2006," said Khedekar.

Khedekar is also a recipient of the ICAR award for taking an initiative for community watershed development to harvest maximum possible rain water to solve the water scarcity problem of the village. He was instrumental in making his village tanker free because of proper water management and auditing.

He took an initiative for community watershed development to harvest maximum possible rain water. Various voluntary works such as loose boulder structures, water observation trench, plugs for water percolation and contour building, small bunds of soil and cement were built to facilitate water harvesting.

No tanker is needed in the village since the successful completion of the project and the village became self-reliant in terms of water requirement. Khedekar did not stop here. After harvesting, he concentrated on water auditing. He stressed on efficient and judicious utilisation of water in the village. Measures for controlling soil erosion to maintain the soil's fertility were taken. "The rainfall caused a loss of two tonnes of soil erosion per hectare which resulted in the loss of fertility. Restoring the carbon nitrogen ratio in the soil from 0.30% to the ideal amount of around 1% was an important," said Khedekar.

The Integrated Nutrition Management (INMG) to study and efficiently use the available land, water and money for agricultural activities was conducted. The study of water required for each crop and the available water in the area was conducted and accordingly the crops were cultivated with the help of available resources.

Sugarcane requires one crore litres of water per acre, jowar requires one crore litres per 10 acres while gram requires one crore litres of water per 20 acres.

A fertility map of the village was prepared to identify the types of crops that could be cultivated in the available soil. Six farm ponds, drip and sprinkle irrigation methods, and shed net houses were used for efficient utilisation of water. Priorities were set unanimously after every monsoon, first to meet the drinking water requirements of the village, then for cattle and lastly for agriculture.

The village has been equipped with a rain gauging instrument and other technical

support to facilitate water management and auditing of water.

In spite of the severe drought situation this year, the farmers in the village harvested both kharif and rabi crops. But water for drinking purpose was priority and in case of rabi crop only jowar, which requires less moisture was cultivated, Khedekar said.

Rising Bhavanisagar level makes farmer happy in western TN

After remaining parched for a long period, Bhavanisagar reservoir is witnessing a significant increase in water level for the last five days due to the continuing heavy rain in its catchment areas. The rise in water level has made hundreds of farmers in Erode, Tirupur and Karur districts happy.

According to PWD sources, the water level rose to 62 feet in five days from 49 feet that was measured during the beginning of south west monsoon. The dam, the lifeline of farmers in the region who mainly cultivate rice, sugarcane, turmeric, ragi and coconut, has been witnessing copious inflow since June 1 following good rainfall in its catchment area.

The water level is likely to increase further in the coming days as there is continuous rain in the catchment areas in Upper Bhavani, Attappady, Silent Valley and Vellingiri Hills. Opening of shutters of Pillur dam on the upper reaches in Bhavani river also contributed to the heavy flow. According to officials, 7,846 cubic metres of water is now being reaching the dam per second. While the flow in the river below the dam at present is 600 cubic metres per second. Its canals carry five cubic metres of water per second. The maximum water level in the dam is 105 feet.

"The dam is the primary water source for more than 2.5 lakh acres in Erode, Karur and Tirupur districts. Water level in the dam is increasing after two failed monsoons. The existing storage in the dam was utilised for old ayacuts of Bhavani river - Kalingarayan, Thadapalli and Arakkankottai. If there is more water, the whole region getting would get enough water for agriculture," said Lower Bhavani Farmers' Association leader C Nallasamy.

According to him, farmers in the Lower Bhavani Project ayacut, which has more than 2 lakh acres, were not given water for irrigation this year as the dam had very little water.

"We will claim our due share as there is enough flow into the reservoir," he said.

Nature adds colour to forest officer's art

Being a forest officer has helped Sanjeev Kumar experience nature closely, the reflection of which is prominent in his works.

The 46-year-old forest conservator, who is posted in Jamshedpur at present, is a

painter who, over the years, has utilized every opportunity that his profession has given to perfect his work of art.

Kumar started painting when he was in school and fell in love with the medium of expression. The self-taught painter trained himself to be a perfectionist.

He earned praise from well-known artists, both national and international for his oil paintings at the Confluence: Expression's 9th Exhibition of Paintings & Sculptures held at Birla Academy of Art and Culture in Kolkata this June.

"It was indeed a momentous occasion for a person like me who is a self-taught artist to receive accolades from well-known artists at the national level exhibition," said Kumar.

The event was organized Shree Kala Niketan.

"The creative energy in me received impetus following successful display of my (oil) paintings in Bangalore exhibition in 2012," said Kumar, who is preparing to fly to Thimpu to exhibit his works at the Nehru-Wangchuk Cultural Centre.

Water monitor

Punjab is promoting a low-cost, farmer-friendly instrument as the answer to its groundwater problems. It comes with markers that tells the farmer when his paddy fields have just the amount of water they need.

The tensiometer has been launched under a three-year project by Punjab Agriculture University in collaboration with University of Columbia and is being funded by International Development Research Centre, Canada.

Started with less than 100 farmers in just 10 villages of a single district a couple of years ago, the instrument is being used by around 2,000 farmers in half a dozen districts this paddy season, which started on June 1. It can save around 20 to 25 per cent irrigation water without any effect on crop yield. Installed at a depth of 15-20 cm in the field, it comes with yellow and green strips that serve as indicators. The farmer needs just to watch the water level inside its inner tube. Irrigation of paddy is necessary only when the level reaches yellow.

After 15 days of flood irrigation, paddy just needs moisture, but farmers' psyche is such that they feel the crop will not survive without continuous flooding, says Dr R S Sidhu, dean of basic science and humanities at PAU, and principal project director of the programme. "Punjab farmers normally inundate their already irrigated paddy fields, thinking power supply may not be there the next day. It causes a huge loss of underground water and electricity," says Sidhu.

"It was initially difficult to motivate farmers to go for this water-saving instrument. We started with around 100 farmers, but now farmers have started understanding its benefits and this year there has been a demand from over 2,000 farmers."

Dr M S Gill, PAU's director for extension education, says Punjab's farmers tend to irrigate paddy 26-27 times when it can be kept at four or five times. "Even if a farmer can save four-five watering sessions in a season in a single field, it would ultimately result in a huge saving in a state like Punjab, where over 26 lakh hectares is dedicated under paddy," says Dr Kamla Vatta, associate professor.

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Jul 1

Max Min

25° 12°

Tomorrow's Forecast





Tuesday, Jul 2

Max Min

Cloudy 27° 12°

	35° 27°	Cloudy	37° 27°
Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:46		
Humidity: 49	Sunset: 06:39		
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1006		

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Jul 3	Thursday Jul 4	Friday Jul 5	Saturday Jul 6	Sunday Jul 7
				
37° 28°	35° 26°	37° 26°	36° 26°	37° 27°
Cloudy	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast	Overcast

Airport

Rain: 0	Sunrise: 05:46
Humidity: 49	Sunset: 06:39
Wind: normal	Barometer: 1006

THE HINDU Business Line

Pepper stays hot on strong demand



Pepper futures last week turned hot on strong demand amid tight availability and some speculative activities. As the imports of pepper have become costly, the value addition industry had to buy from the indigenous sources. That phenomenon coupled with the strong upcountry demand pushed the prices, market sources said. Heavy rains in the growing areas in Kerala and Karnataka have stopped arrival of the materials, they said. Many in the upcountry markets have been buying only limited quantities earlier anticipating the price would fall when the new crop hit the market. But, contrary to their expectations, the prices ruled firm most of the time.

Vietnam is reported to have exported an estimated 85,000 tonnes in January-June this year. Hence, the Vietnamese growers may not sell at lower rates. Indonesia has been silent as its new crop is expected to hit the market by mid-July. Next crop of Brazil may hit the market by late September-early Oct. Given this scenario, the main source of supply, currently apart from Vietnam, is India and if the Indian prices remained competitive some business could come for the Malabar in the coming days.

At the same time, availability of physical pepper might turn out to be a problem. The situation might benefit those who have their stocks locked up in the warehouses since end-last year as the prices have now reached their expected levels. Last week, on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE) July, Aug and Sep soared by Rs 2,112, Rs 2,106 and Rs 1,962 a quintal respectively to close on Saturday at Rs 40,929, Rs 41,000 and Rs 40,701.

Where as, on the IPSTA, these three active contracts increased by Rs 3,000, Rs 2,940 and Rs 2,940 a quintal respectively to close at Rs 40,435, Rs 40,313 and Rs 40,314. Spot prices shot up by Rs 3,800 to close at Rs 39,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,000 (garbled) on strong demand amid tight supply. Indian parity in the international market was at \$7,050 a tonne (c&) for Europe and around \$7,200 a tonne (c&f) for the US at July prices.

Palm oil to test resistance, slide

Malaysian palm oil futures on the BMD ended lower on Friday tracking weak global commodity markets, while markets braced for a key US agricultural report that is

expected to show higher planting of competing soyabean. Losses were capped by strong exports buoyed by demand ahead of a month-long Ramzan in July. Exports in June 1-25 rose between 6 and 10 per cent compared to the same period in May. Markets will be looking forward to data on total palm oil exports in June, due to be released on Monday, to gauge overall demand.

In other markets, Brent crude oil futures rose to around \$103 a barrel after falling to multi-month lows, boosted by comments from Federal Reserve governors that the U.S. central bank is in no rush to curtail stimulus programme. CPO active month futures moved against our expectations.

As mentioned in the earlier update, a daily close below MYR 2,355-60 a tonne could turn the picture weak again. Another crucial support lies at 2,330-35 now. CPO futures have been fluctuating in a broad zone with the prevailing bias changing from bearish to bullish. However, the trend still remains bearish and weakness persists on the bigger picture. In the coming week, while 2,330-35 holds, a pullback to 2,395-2,400 looks likely initially.

However, prices could find it difficult to sustain and head lower again. Presently, technical pictures do not suggest any major trend either ways. Once below MYR 2,300, prices could once again start declining towards MYR 2,200 or even lower in the coming months. Any retracement could get capped in the MYR 2,385-2,420 levels now. The wave counts still remains mixed and prefer for the time being to go with possibility of an end of wave "C" at MYR 2,220 a tonne now. A decline below 2,350 has dashed our bullish hopes. Ideally, prices could come down towards 2,095 or even lower in the bigger picture.

With the way prices have been behaving, the preferred wave counts now could be an extended wave "A-B-C-D-E" and eventually a break below MYR 2,200 opening the way for lower levels. RSI is in the neutral zone indicating that it is neither overbought nor oversold. The averages in MACD are still above the zero line of the indicator hinting at a bullish to be intact. Only a crossover below the zero line again could indicate a bearish trend. Therefore, look for palm oil futures to test the resistance levels and then decline. Supports are at MYR 2,335, 2,300 and 2,250. Resistances are at MYR 2,375, 2,405 and 2,445.

(The author is the Director of Commtrendz Research and also in the advisory panel of Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd (MCX). The views expressed in this column are his own and not that of MCX. This analysis is based on the historical price movements and there is risk of loss in trading. He can be reached at gnanasekar.t@gmail.com.)

Spot rubber rules steady

KOTTAYAM, JUNE 29:

Spot rubber finished firm on Saturday. The weekend session extended the gain in selected counters expecting a better opening on Monday. Sheet rubber improved to Rs

180 (178.50) a kg, according to traders. The grade closed steady at Rs 179 a kg as reported by the Rubber Board.

The July futures slid to Rs 182.20 (182.98), August to Rs 177.50 (177.84) and September to Rs 172.47 (172.66) while the October futures improved to Rs 170.50 (169.30) and November to Rs 164.85 (162.41) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 180 (178.50); RSS-5: 174 (173); Ungraded: 164 (163); ISNR 20: 164 (164) and Latex 60 per cent: 132.50 (132.50)

Coconut tech body clears projects worth Rs 95 cr

The Project Approval Committee on Technology Mission on Coconut (TMOC) has cleared 43 projects with an outlay of Rs 94.72 crore and a subsidy of Rs 9.87 crore. As many as nine research projects including process standardisation of *Neera* are listed in the approved projects.

Under the project component Processing and Product Diversification, 34 manufacturing units have been sanctioned which included setting up of 11 desiccated coconut powder manufacturing units, one virgin coconut oil unit, four tender coconut water units, two coconut milk powder units, one coconut water-based vinegar unit, two coconut shell charcoal units, five coconut shell-based activated carbon, seven ball copra and one milling copra unit. In Kerala, six units were sanctioned for desiccated coconut powder, virgin coconut oil, coconut milk powder and packaging of tender coconut water having the capacity to process 85,000 nuts a day.

In addition, one vinegar unit, one ball copra unit for processing 80,000 nuts a year and one milling copra unit to Federation of Coconut Producers' Society (Muthalamada, Palakkad) were also sanctioned. In Karnataka, nine units of Desiccated Coconut Powder having a capacity for processing 2,85,000 nuts/day, one tender coconut water packing unit for processing 20,000 nuts/day and two shell charcoal and one activated carbon unit with a capacity to process 180 tonnes of shell a day were sanctioned. In Tamil Nadu, three units for tender coconut water and one milk powder unit for processing 1,46,000 nuts a day and three activated carbon having production capacity of 247.50 tonnes shell a day were sanctioned. In Andhra Pradesh, PAC sanctioned five ball copra units with a capacity to process 41.5 lakh coconuts/year.

Tea Board to form 400 SHGs

Tea Board has decided to form 400 Self Help Groups (SHGs) of growers annually to channelise the smooth flow of funds amounting to Rs 200 crore earmarked for small grower development till March 31, 2017. "The Board prefers to channelise funds through SHGs but had proposed to form only 75 SHGs annually. Contending at the Board meeting held in Valparai on Tuesday that this could benefit only 3,750 small growers out of the nearly two lakh growers in the country, we have got the Board approval for forming 400 SHGs annually," Tea Board Vice-Chairman Koshy Baby told *Business Line*.

“However, to overcome the drought impact, Finance Ministry has allowed even individuals, besides SHGs, to benefit from the 40 per cent subsidy on the cost of investment on irrigation facilities including tube well, check dam, sprinkler and drip irrigation. This is part of the Rs 200-crore package,” Tea Board member S. Ramu said. “We have suggested to the Board to launch a special programme for training and demonstration for small growers and loan-cum-subsidy scheme for setting up processing units by SHGs. We asked for employing the required number of qualified fresh hands and not engage retired persons as advisers,” Board member Samir Rai added.

Gur prices close quiet in thin trade



Steady conditions prevailed in the wholesale Jaggery market at national capital on Saturday following sporadic demand against reduced supply. Muzaffarnagar and Muradnagar gur markets too ended at around overnight closing levels on little doing. Marketmen said arrivals and offtake almost remained at par which kept the prices unmoved. The following are today's quotations per quintal:

Gur chakku 3,300-3,400, pedi 3,400-3,500, dhayya 3,600- 3,700 and shakkar 3,600-3,700. Muzaffarnagar: Rasket 2,800-2,875, chakku 3,000-3,150 and khurpa N.T. Muradnagar: Pedi 3100-3,150 and dhayya 3,100-3150.

Pistachio prices up on buying support



Pistachio prices rose up to Rs 25 per kg in the national capital on Saturday largely on the back of increased buying by retailers and stockists amid low stocks. Fall in supplies from overseas markets also supported the rise in prices. Pistachio Irani, hairati and peshwari rose up to Rs 25 to conclude at Rs 1,020-1,125, Rs 880-925 and Rs 1,010-1,050 per kg, respectively.

Marketmen said fresh buying by retailers and stockists against fall in supplies from overseas markets, mainly pushed up pistachio prices on the dry fruit market here. The following are today's quotations (per 40 kg): Almond (California) Rs 14,900 Almond (Gurbandi-new) Rs 7,700-8,000; Almond (Girdhi) Rs 4,200-4,700; Abjosh Afghani Rs 8,000-20,000.

Almond Kernel (California-new) Rs 520-535 per kg, Almond Kernel (Gurbandi-new) Rs 450-550 per kg. Pistachio Irani Rs 1,020-1,125 Pistachio Hairati Rs 880-925 Pistachio Peshawari Rs 1,010-1,050 Pistachio Dodi (Roasted) 650-700.

Chilli, jeera prices rise as demand picks up



Red chilli and jeera prices rose by Rs 100 per quintal in the national capital on Sunday largely on the back of a pick-up in demand from local parties as well as overseas enquiries. Red chilli prices rose by Rs 100 to settle at Rs 6,500-12,000 per quintal. Jeera common and jeera best quality also higher by Rs 100 each to conclude at Rs 13,000-13,600 and Rs 17,000-17,600 per quintal, respectively.

Traders said buying support from retailers and exporters against fall in supplies from producing belts, mainly pushed up chilli and jeera prices on the wholesale kirana market here. The following are today's quotations per quintal: Ajwain 10,500-17,500, black pepper (per kg) 420-545, betel-nut (kg) 180-200, cardamom brown-Jhundiwali (kg) 1,000-1,055 and cardamom brown-Kanchicut (kg) 1,070-1,200. Cardamom small (kg): Chitridar 650-750, cardamom (colour robin) 600-700, cardamom bold 650-700, cardamom extra (bold) 800-900 and cloves (kg) 750-850.

Caustic soda prices rise on fall in supply

Caustic soda prices rose by Rs 100 per 50 kg in the national capital on Saturday on account of firm demand from consuming industries amid fall in supplies from producing belts. Caustic soda flake rose by Rs 100 to Rs 1,800-1,900 per 50 kg.

Marketmen said apart from good demand from detergent manufacturers, tight supplies from producing belts also pushed up caustic soda prices on the wholesale chemical market here.

The following are today's quotations: Ammonium chloride (50 kg) Rs 1,100-2,400, Acetic acid (1 kg) Rs 44-54, Ammonia bicarb (25 kg) Rs 600-900, Boric acid technical (50 kg) Rs 4,500-5,200, Borex granular (50 kg) Rs 2,200-2,600.

Caustic soda flake (50 kg) Rs 1,800-1,900, Citric acid (50 kg) (China) Rs 3,500-3,900, Citric acid deshi (50 kg) Rs 3,000-3,300, Camphor slab (1 kg) Rs 400, Camphor powder (1kg) Rs 320, Glycerine (1 kg) Rs 95-125, Hexamine (1kg) Rs 95, Hydrogen peroxide (1 kg) Rs 35-50, menthol bold crystal (per kg) Rs 1,280, menthol flake (1 kg) Rs 1,180 and mentha oil (1kg) Rs 1,005.

Business Standard

Public, private agencies to avail automatic weather station services

Accurate weather data may not be the only domain of Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) as is the case now. Soon the public authorities and private agencies like insurers may be able to fetch data from private vendors managing and installing "automatic weather stations".

The ministry of agriculture has come out with the guidelines for setting up of automatic weather stations along with accreditation and certification norms for private vendors to manage, install weather stations and certify quality of data.

These guidelines are crucial and much awaited both by the government and private parties involved in national agricultural insurance scheme which is a national programme for ensuring farmer security in enhancing crop productivity or weather-based insurance products .

The government proposes to roll out an integrated farmer security plan by reworking insurance schemes and consolidating all other risk management schemes to benefit farmers at large. It will be known as modified crop insurance scheme.

Additionally, these weather stations could also provide data for private insurers offering weather-based crop insurance.

An automatic weather station is a meteorological station where observations are made and transmitted automatically. It forms part of a network of meteorological stations each transmitting its processed data to a central unit.

Officials explained that the criteria for certification and accreditation of third party vendors will help them in deciding weather station location, sensor specifications to ensure the quality of weather data as it is important for insurance claim settlement. Weather-based crop insurance scheme (WBCIS) is currently a pilot scheme since

kharif 2007 where 20-80% of the total premium is subsidised. Over 20% of the country is currently covered under WBCIS.

Weather insurance has a strong correlation between yield and weather and is currently the insurance scheme is only for those crops where the correlation is strong like wheat, rice etc. Explaining this officials said that WBCIS uses weather parameters as proxy for crop yields in compensating cultivators for deemed crop losses.

However lack of adequate weather stations lead to less qualified data required to calculate the risk and premium. Ideally crops within a radius of 5 km from a weather station could be insured with reasonable reduction in basis risks and anything beyond 5 km risks tend to increase the uncertainty in terms of increased basis risk.

It is estimated that within a radius of 5 km, about 40,000 weather stations would be required at the national level to service weather insurance", said an official.

" One of the serious challenge is basis risk which is difference between weather experience at the location of the weather station and the farm which is referred to the weather station under the scheme. Farms closer to the location to the weather station tend to experience almost similar weather and therefore the basis risk is low", they added.

Given the enormity of the task , private weather data providers have entered the market to supply data to the insurance companies at fees. However there are no guidelines yet to qualify the data for use.

Under the modified weather scheme of the government, the new policy would provide insurance cover to be sold by insurance companies, where 90% would be upfront subsidy premium paid by the government and 10% premium by farmers, said official sources.

Thus an area of concern is the subsidy payment mechanism where the criteria to be reworked are mode of transfer, nature of recipients, calculation methodology of subsidy, nature of beneficiary regions, type of crops to be insured and nature of risk. The government is also looking at variants of insurance covers to be included under the agriculture insurance schemes.

One is the weather index-based crop insurance, which is currently undergoing pilot studies. The second product is a combination of weather-based index and crop yield-based index. Existing products are either yield-based assessment of risk or weather-

based risk. The combination product is based on the total sum insured for a crop insured by the farmer to be divided in two categories — influence of yield and weather on crop.

Other components that may be designed into the modified insurance scheme is to add savings-linked crop insurance since cultivators are less enthusiastic to buy insurance products if there are no payouts in the previous season.

Therefore, some amount of the premium paid will be invested on behalf of the farmer to earn reasonable investment return and the farmer can take the money after full year of remaining invested in the scheme or certain%age in between,said officials.