

02 July, 2013

**Rs. 50 cr. released for copra procurement: Minister**

*'Number of procurement centres increased to 20'*

Shamanur Shivashankarappa, Minister for Horticulture, has said that the government has released Rs. 50 crore for purchase of copra and asked growers to avail themselves of the benefits.

Inaugurating a copra procurement centre on the premises of the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) yard here on Monday, Mr. Shivashankarappa said that the government was committed to protecting the interests of farmers. The price of copra in the open market had come down to less than Rs. 4,000 a quintal. Earlier, there were only 11 copra procurement centres in the State. Now there were 20. The Union government would give Rs. 5,500 a quintal and the State Rs. 1,000 a quintal as incentive for the copra purchased at the procurement centres, he said.

Mr. Shivashankarappa said that payment to farmers would be made within three days of the sale. Farmers had to bring the pahani records of their land for selling their crop at the centres. They should ensure that the moisture content in the copra brought to the centre was less than 7 per cent, he said.

**APMC**

There were plans to streamline the APMCs in the State as some of them were earning huge profits while many others were struggling. After holding a discussion with officials, steps would be taken to revamp all the APMCs. The APMC here would soon be improved. Steps would be taken to improve roads in and around the APMC here, besides improving the condition of roads in surrounding villages, he said.

Mr. Shivashankarappa said that two glasshouses on the lines of the one at Lalbagh in Bangalore would be set up here. The officials had been directed to identify the parks where the glasshouses could be set up at an estimated cost of Rs. 5 crore each, he said.

### **Online trading**

In order to help farmers with online trading, the government was planning to build large warehouses in every village. Farmers could also store their agricultural produce in the warehouses whenever market prices came down. The proposal was in the initial stages as modalities were being worked out, he said.

President of the local APMC Halappa, G.R. Shanmukhappa and N.G. Puttaswamy spoke.

### **Institute develops guide to raise saplings of great pedigree**

*It identifies 15 species and develops products to protect them from pests*



Saplings seen in a mother bed inside the chambers at the IFGTB campus in Coimbatore. Photo courtesy: IFGTB.

Pure breed and pedigree species are normally confined to the world of pets. Now, from the Coimbatore-based Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB), one can get high-quality saplings, whose lineage could be traced to great ancestors.

Talking about the 'Seed Bank', a new initiative, institute Director N. Krishnakumar told *The Hindu* that his institute identified mother trees and collected seeds and

branches from them. The collected branches are then raised in beds, using fertigation (fertilisers mixed in water). Once they grow, branches are periodically cut and transplanted. By adopting this technique, more shoots could be produced and raising the saplings in a bed could reduce the space requirement for nursery and time for production, Dr. Krishnakumar said.

A total of 15 species of trees outside the forests such as Ailanthus, Kumizh, Malai Vembu, Moongil, Poovarasu, Kadhambam and Thekku to name a few, were identified by the institute for raising the saplings.

With the available beds, the institute would be able to produce 5 lakh seedlings in three months. The institute would also raise seedlings on request from farmers or industry.

Citing the example of Malai Vembu, Dr. Krishnakumar said there was a great demand for this species for making plywood veneers. So the farmers could take the saplings from us without bothering about their quality, he said.

Normally when saplings of trees such as teak or malai vembu are raised no guidance is available for farmers in case the trees are attacked by pests or insects. In order to overcome this problem, the institute has developed half-a-dozen products such as bio-pesticides, bio-boosters, bio-fertilizers, Fixers and Mobilizers. All these products were made organically and with a view to enhancing the growth of seedlings, he said.

Most of the research work finds a mention in a scientific publication or presented at a workshop or seminar. In order to directly reach out to farmers, the institute had started the seed bank initiative, which would also help in creating a link with industry.

Those interested in the seedlings can contact 0422-2484100 or write to: [dir\\_ifgtb@icfre.org](mailto:dir_ifgtb@icfre.org)

## **Farmers flay SIPCOT proposal to acquire cultivable lands**

A section of residents and farmers in Palayam, Kottarnatham and D. Goodalur have demanded that the district administration drop the proposal to acquire cultivable lands for setting up the SIPCOT industrial estate in 2,000 acres in Vedasandur block here on Monday.

Hundreds of farmers and local people from Kottarnatham, Palayam and near by areas staged a demonstration before the collectorate and later laid a siege to it.

“The state government has plans to acquire agriculture lands in D. Goodalur, Landhakottai, and Karungal panchayats for the proposed SIPCOT estate.

Such measure will wipe out the livelihood of thousands of farmers in these villages as the Vedasandur block has large tracts of cultivable land”, said L. Thangavel, union secretary of Tamil Nadu Farmers Association.

Farmers have been raising tuar, maize, millet, sesame seeds and chowlee bean (thattai payaru) in these villages. Majority of the farmers have small land holdings and the proposed project would not only wipe out agricultural activities but also make them labourers”, said Dindigul MLA K. Balabarathi, who led the farmers. Though, the government had issued orders stating that agricultural land should not be acquired under any circumstances for any other purposes, the order is being violated by the government itself, she charged. Cultivable lands are already shrinking at an alarming pace in the district owing to shortage of water, failure of monsoon and other developmental activities.

Many farmers did not raise crop last season owing to failure of monsoon. Now, at a time when the farmers are ready to raise single crop this year due to good rains, the proposal to acquire the lands would ultimately leave 5,000 persons jobless”, she worried.

## **Sivaganga farmers get ready to start sowing**

As the farmers in the district were gearing up for cultivation of paddy, pulses and oil seeds taking advantage of the southwest monsoon, the Department of Agriculture has made available adequate stocks of seeds and fertilisers.

An official release here on Monday said the Agriculture extension centres has stocks of 266 metric tonnes of paddy seeds, 6.8 metric tonnes of pulses seeds and 20.5 metric tonnes of oil seeds. The farmers could avail them at subsidised rates, it said.

There was also adequate stocks of pesticide and fertilisers, including Urea, DAP and Potash in both private shops and primary agriculture cooperative societies, the release said.

During this season, the department would vigorously implement the new technologies of gap filling, integrated nutrient management and plant protection measures in paddy cultivation in rain fed areas, official sources said. The implementation of new technologies is expected to help the farmers increase the yield by 20 per cent. Presently, the average yield of paddy in rain fed areas was 2.5 to 3 tonnes and with the implementation of new technologies, the yield is expected to go up from a minimum of 3 tonnes to the maximum of 4.5 tonnes, they said.

### **Taking pesticide-free rice directly to consumers**

*Vadakkenchery farmers' forum to sell organic rice at Rs.50 a kg*

A.K. Balan, CPI(M) MLA, on Monday released the 'Aswathy' brand of organic Palakkadan Matta rice cultivated by the Vadakkenchery Padasekhara Samiti, at a function organised by the Agriculture Department at the Panchayat Hall here.

The farmers of Vadakkenchery Padasekhara Nellulpathaka Samiti will sell the organic rice directly to consumers. The samiti has been engaged in organic paddy cultivation since 2007-08 with the support of the State Agriculture Department and the grama panchayat.

Earlier, the samiti used to export this rice variety. However, after the ban imposed by the Union government on export of rice except the Basmati variety, the farmers of Vadakkencherry found it difficult to sell their product owing to low prices for organic products in the local market. The rice will be sold at Rs.50 a kg.

### **KAU to develop Kuttanad as global farm heritage site**

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) is readying a project to develop Kuttanad as a global agricultural heritage site and showcase the 'below sea level farming' method as an attraction.

KAU Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran told *The Hindu* that the project involved the establishment of a natural history museum for Kuttanad, a centre for rice germplasm at Mankombu, and an international research and training centre for below sea level farming at Kumarakom.

He said the Regional Agricultural Research Station, Kumarakom and the Rice Research Station, Mankombu would spearhead the activities.

"The proposed centre for rice germplasm at Mankombu will house all available varieties of rice seed. It will be a valuable collection expected to help future breeding programmes. We have already collected more than 500 varieties. The Kumarakom centre will conduct international training programmes on Kuttanad farming for agriculture scientists and students in association with the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO)," Dr. Rajendran said. The project, estimated to cost Rs.50 crore, has been cleared by the State government and will be launched as soon as Central assistance is released. The State government has allocated Rs.10 crore for the first phase. The project is expected to revitalise the KAU Stations at Kumarakom and Mankombu which have played a major role in upholding the farming traditions in the Kuttanad ecosystem.

The wetland integrated farming system developed by the Regional Agricultural Research Station, Kumarakom, involves rotational cropping of rice and fish, also

incorporating the rearing of duck and cattle, and different crops to render the production system more organic, environment-friendly, and profitable. The centre has also developed cage culture of 'pearl spot' (Karimeen) and pen culture of fast-growing fish in open water expanses.

Scientists at RARS successfully introduced a tiny weevil *Cirtobagus savineae* for the biological control of salvinia, a dreaded aquatic weed. "Similar efforts are now on for the control of *Eichhornia crassipes* which now has emerged as the most menacing threat to the waterbodies in Kerala," A.V. Mathew, Associate Director, said.

The Rice Research Station has developed 21 high-yielding rice varieties to cater to the location specific requirement of farmers over the last 73 years. The station was instrumental in promoting mechanisation of rice farming in the area and management of weeds, pests, and diseases.

'Under the Kuttanad Package, the station has taken up research programmes for increasing the profitability of rice farmers using short-duration varieties to overcome climatic changes and pests and diseases. Resource conservation technologies and nutrient management practices introduced by the station has helped reduce the cost of cultivation and promote biological control of pests and diseases," station Head S. Leenakumary said.

***The project, estimated to cost Rs. 50 crore, will showcase the 'below sea level farming' method.***

### **Farmers offer 'bagina' at Kabini reservoir**

With the Kabini dam attaining the full level, farmers from Mysore and Chamarajanagar districts under the Kabini command areas offered 'bagina' to the reservoir on Sunday. However, tension prevailed in the area when the police prevented over 200 farmers, including women, who tried to enter the dam

through the main gate after Mariswamy, Executive Engineer, told them that the dam was not full.

Farmers led by Kurubur Shanthakumar, president, Kabini Raitha Hitarakshana Samiti, shouted slogans against the police and Irrigation Department officials.

Mr. Shantakumar told Mahadevaiah, Deputy Superintendent of Police, and Mr. Mariswamy, that they had informed the officials about the programme one week in advance.

### **Pilot scheme to transform PACS**

*The aim is to see PACS as outreach of successful banking system, says Nabard official*



K.R Nair (second from left), Chief General Manager of the Nabard in AP, addressing a regional workshop in Visakhapatnam on Monday. -Photo: K. R. Deepak

Rural banking is all set to get a major boost with Nabard in association with APCOB launching a pilot scheme to transform Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACS) into Multi Service Centres (MSC).

Keeping in view that only 50 per cent of one lakh-odd PACS in the country are active, Nabard wants to release funds to APCOB to enable District Central Cooperative Banks to assist and guide the PACS sanction various types of loans – widening their base from granting only crop loans.



After helping them in project evaluation and finalising the project reports, the PACS concerned has to make its own assessment for sanction of loan to individual entrepreneurs – be it a Mee Seva Centre, godown, cold storage, one-stop shop for buying agriculture inputs, crop cutting machine or supply of tractors on rent.

The Nabard initiative is driven by the fact that the commercial banks have about 35,000 branches and Regional Rural Banks about 15,000 branches in the rural areas. “Farmers need much more. As PACS have good network and membership, we want to encourage them even to get accreditation for registration with commodities exchange, indulge in trading based on prevailing price of various items, effective market intervention,” NABARD Chief General Manager K. Ramachandran Nair told THE HINDU on Monday.

“Our intention is to see PACS as outreach of successful banking system to achieve financial inclusion,” he said. The PACS will get funds for which they have to fix the rate of interest to be charged from the beneficiaries. NABARD will collect an 11 per cent interest from them.

Mr. Nair said they would also encourage PACS to fund for add-on services to make them viable. Of 2,768 PACS, they are targeting to sanction loans to 700 in Andhra Pradesh in the first phase so as to make them frontrunners. Rs.116 crore has been sanctioned for 187 PACS in the first phase, of which Rs.20 crore has already been released.

NABARD, on its part will motivate them for capacity building, finance and accompanying measure such as by giving them grant for building backup infrastructure like computers and online connectivity.

APCOB, on its part will have a Project Monitoring Unit and DCCBs at the district level will have PACS Development Units.

## Water released into the river from Harangi reservoir



A river runs through it: Milky water gushing out of the sluice gates of the Harangi reservoir in Kodagu after water was released into the river downstream on Monday.

All four sluice gates were opened to release water from the Harangi reservoir, near Kushalnagar in Kodagu district, into the river downstream after the reservoir attained near-full level on Monday. Four hundred cusecs have been released into the river.

The water level crossed 2857 feet against its maximum of 2859 feet, prompting irrigation authorities to release water to maintain a safe level.

Milky sheets of water gushed out of the gates whose sound reverberated in the surrounding area, relished by a few who were present around.

Harangi irrigation officials and the staff offered customary puja to the deity abutting the river to mark the event.

The reservoir attained the level in June this year (yesterday) after several years and much ahead than last year. Farmers depend on Harangi water for irrigation activities in the achcut areas spanning 13 lakh acres. The outflow, however, into the river is just 400 cusecs this year compared to the last few years. Rainfall had abated in the Madapur and surrounding areas from where the reservoir receives copious inflow.

The level of the reservoir would be maintained at 2857 feet and excess water would be released into the river till rains picked up again, officials of the Harangi sub-division, Siddaraju and Palanethraiah said.

### **Kavuri urged to bail out cotton growers**

Former Rajya Sabha member and farmers' leader Yelamanchili Sivaji has given a representation to Union Minister of Textiles Kavuri Sambasiva Rao, pleading with him to bail out cotton farmers through all possible ways.

In a letter to the Union Minister, a copy of which was released to the media, Dr. Sivaji said that the "flip-flop export and import policies" of the government of India were not merely undermining the importers' faith in India as a dependable supplier, but also harming farmers' interests.

### **Wrong timing**

The timing of the policies announced by the government was also adversely affecting farmers' interests, he opined.

A decision on exports was taken long after the farmer markets his produce, he observed.

Giving some suggestions he said that the cost of seed cost should be reduced drastically as it has been increased disproportionately almost to 10 per cent of the total cost of production.

The tussle of Bt. gene should be ended in order to reduce the cost of seed while introducing Bt. gene in varieties by State agricultural universities.

He wanted crop loan to be made interest free and converted into key loan on arrival of produce for storage.

"The CCI should be geared up and should be in the markets continuously. Encourage mechanisation coupled with research and development to suit the local needs and to reduce the drudgery in cotton production," was his suggestion. He said that of the total world cotton production of 119 million bales India's contribution was 33 million bales.

With increased demand and large-scale imports of cotton from China, there was continuous export of raw cotton from India for the last 4 to 5 years.

The imports were also around 10 to 12 lakh bales and expected to touch 20 lakh bales this year.

During the past 6 to 7 years, the productivity was static and on the other hand, increased cost of inputs like seed, wages, fertilizers, chemicals and fuel was pushing the cotton grower to alternative crops.

*'Ambiguous export-import policies of the government harming interests of farmers'*

### **LBP farmers represent to World Bank**

Farmers in the command areas of Lower Bhavani Project (LBP) irrigation system have made a representation to the World Bank asking it not to fund the planned project by Public Works Department to lay concrete flooring along the irrigation canals in the region. Karthikeya Senapathy, a coconut farmer in the area, told *The Hindu* that the agrarian community had approached the World Bank headquarters as the authorities were trying to revive the project with the funding support of World Bank. They authorities, some time back, had assured the farmers that the project would be shelved seeing the resistance from farmers only to deviate from the promise now, he said

According to farmers, laying concrete on the floor and the banks along 200 km stretch of canals will have a cascading effect on the viability of wells since concrete surface prevents the recharging of underground water table.

They pointed out that since the LBP command area was in a semi-arid zone and falls within the rain shadow region of the Western Ghats, effective recharging of wells and broewells in the area were essential for sustainable irrigation as well as for the maintenance of livestock. The farmers also fear that if the authorities go

ahead with the concrete laying project, many trees need to be cut. “This will then be a threat to the entire biodiversity,” they said.

The agrarian community was of the opinion that the World Bank should not go against the basic tenets of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity by funding these type of projects.

### **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.

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.

### **More research support needed: VC**

If the State Government does not provide separate funding for research, it is not possible for agriculture faculty to sustain research work on their salaries.

Based on this, the XII Five Year Plan has suggested that every researcher be provided with a competitive grant of Rs. 1 lakh for carrying out research, said Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K. Ramasamy, here on Monday.

Speaking at the 43rd Foundation Day of the university, he said exacting demand-driven work from faculty was not possible if they were not provided well for their efforts.

The Central Government too had a role to play in providing this support.

“The present projects that the faculty of TNAU are working on are for institutes such as the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR). Projects for the State can be taken up only if the State sponsored these. Central Government extends much support through the ICAR to other States, most of which have at least 15 ICAR institutes. But Tamil Nadu has only two and the support gained through them is minimal,” he said.

### **Shortage**

Speaking on faculty shortage, Mr. Ramasamy said the university and its constituent colleges in the State had nearly 420 vacancies. As many as 177 posts were being filled by the State Government. The university was trying to fill another 170 to 200 posts through the National Agricultural Education Programme (NAEP) of the ICAR.

Swapan Kumar Datta, Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences), ICAR, said that science, institutions, knowledge and governance, would have to be integrated in their functioning to ensure food security and sustainability.

### **More number of girls opts for agriculture education**

*First phase of general counselling for admission to courses begins at TNAU*



K. Indra Priyadarshini, receiving the first provisional admit card from Minister of Agriculture S. Damodaran (second right) during the counselling for undergraduate courses at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore on Monday. Swapan Kumar Datta, Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences), ICAR (third left), and K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU (right), are in the picture.

—PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN

The first phase of general counselling for admission to the agricultural courses of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University that began here on Monday witnessed two unique features.

There were only five boys in the top 20 ranks. And, the first 18 candidates selected B.Sc. courses (17 Agriculture and one Forestry). Only the 19<sup>th</sup> rank holder selected an engineering course. At the end of day one, out of 204 admitted, 178 students had chosen B.Sc. programmes, with the highest number in the Agriculture programme. But the university is not surprised.

A. Rajarajan, Dean (Agriculture), told *The Hindu* that the university already had 70 per cent girls studying various courses. “This is very high compared to the other State Agricultural Universities. This year too the trend is continuing”.

As regards the toppers selecting B.Sc. courses as against the engineering programmes, he said that B.Sc. Agriculture had always been the favourite of the toppers, even those who had cut-offs equal to that of medical and engineering. This time only those who were keen on the unique engineering programmes of the university chose them.

In earlier years, medical and engineering counselling of the Anna University was always held after TNAU counselling. Some students, who chose an engineering course at TNAU, dropped out on securing a medical seat, or engineering seat of the Anna University.

This time, however, students who attended the TNAU counselling were ones who had made up their mind to study in the university only. Since the counselling was held after the medical and engineering counselling, only those who were keen on an agricultural education attended the TNAU counselling.

True to this premise, the first student who received the provisional admit card – Indra Priyadarshini (198.25) from Udumalpet – had made up her mind about B.Sc. Agriculture. Though her medical cut-off would have enabled her get a seat in counselling, she did not even attend it.

“My aim is to complete the programme and appear for Union Public Service Commission examination. I want to become an Indian Administrative Service officer. The university provides good facilities for this too,” she said. She received the admit card from Minister of Agriculture S. Damodaran, in the presence of Swapan Kumar Datta, Deputy Director General (Crop Sciences), Indian Council for Agricultural Research, and K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU.

The counselling, for admission to 13 programmes, under the single window system is to fill 1,330 seats. The university was allotted 10 per cent extra seats this year. In a first, TNAU had digitised its whole UG admission process – from buying applications online till getting the admit card. The vacancy positions, as



seats were being filled during counselling, were also made instantly available on the university website.

### **Horticulture department raises coronation saplings**



### **NURSERY INAUGURATED**

Horticulture Department here has inaugurated a nursery at Thummanahatti, near The Nilgiris, with a view to raise its own coronation flower saplings for distributing to the general public.

The nursery has been established at a cost of Rs. 1.4 crores under the National Agriculture Development Scheme.

For raising the required number of seedlings, green houses have been set up for nursing the mother plants and from which branches of those saplings will be removed and strengthened for raising more saplings.

Adequate infrastructures required have been created. Mother saplings have been brought from Holland, Spain

## Punjab govt clears subsidy for Agriculture Power tariff



APA vegetable vendor waits for customers at a market in Amritsar. Vegetables and fruits growers had demanded electricity supply at Agriculture Power tariff during the crop diversification programme in the State. File photo

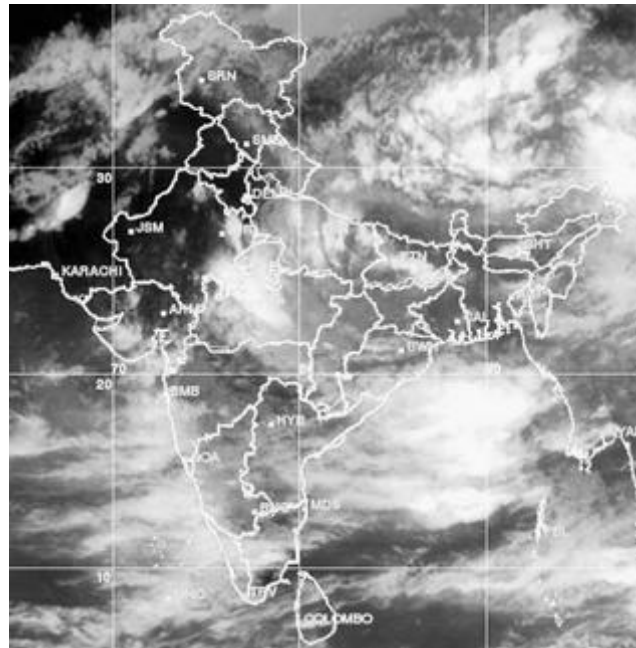
Punjab government on Monday approved a proposal for providing Rs. 1.16 crore subsidy for metered electric supply at Agriculture Power (AP) tariff to dairy, goatery, piggery and fish farmers besides others engaged in hi-tech and density cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal cleared the file to this effect this morning, an official said.

The Chief Minister had held detailed meetings with various groups of farmers and agriculture experts regarding crop diversification programme in the State in April this year.

Majority of dairy, piggery, goatery and fish farmers besides vegetables and fruits growers had demanded electricity supply at AP tariff during these deliberations.

## Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on July 02nd.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	39	28	0	155
New Delhi (Sfd)	37	28	0	119
Chandigarh	33	27	0	275
Hissar	39	27	0	101
Bhuntar	33	21	0	137
Shimla	25	17	0	320
Jammu	35	26	0	101
Srinagar	29	17	2	55
Amritsar	37	27	0	139
Patiala	36	28	0	145
Jaipur	37	30	0	163
Udaipur	33	27	0	93
Allahabad	27	24	101	409

Lucknow	26	22	39	323
Varanasi	26	25	32	226
Dehradun	31	23	0	1095
Agartala	30	25	2	399
Ahmedabad	36	27	0	103
Bangalore	29	19	0	173
Bhubaneshwar	31	23	5	298
Bhopal	32	22	0	459
Chennai	36	26	0	164
Guwahati	35	26	tr	301
Hyderabad	32	24	1	203
Kolkata	28	27	7	405
Mumbai	32	27	1	955
Nagpur	34	26	0	457
Patna	30	27	2	125
Pune	29	22	1	298
Thiruvananthapuram	30	23	15	514
Imphal	29	23	7	135
Shillong	23	19	1	378

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 active in east Uttar Pradesh. The western end of monsoon trough passes close to foot hills of Himalayas and eastern end passes through Kheri, centre of low pressure area and thence southeast wards.

**RAINFALL:** Rain/thundershowers have occurred at many places over east Uttar Pradesh, at a few places over Jammu and Kashmir and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (3 cm and above)

EAST RAJASTHAN: Nadoti 6, Sikrai 5, Sapotra 4 and Gangapur 3, EAST UTTAR PRADESH (5 cm and above) Allahabad 10, Bara and Koraon 9 each, Karchhana, Phoolpur, Elgin Bridge and Kunda 8 each, Handia, Meja, Haidergarh, Patti and Dalman 6 each and Rae Bareli, Fursatganj, Pratapgarh, Fatehpur, Chhatnag 5 each and WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Mahorni 11, Jhansi and Lalitpur 5 each and Garotha and Moth 3 each.

**FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 03rd July 2013:** Rain/thundershowers would occur at most places over east Uttar Pradesh, at many places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and west Uttar Pradesh, at a few places over east Rajasthan, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Haryana and at one or two places over rest of the region.

**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 03rd July 2013:** Generally cloudy sky. Rain/thundershowers may occur in some areas.



# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## **Arossim farmers plaint referred to GSPCB'**

Environment and forest minister Alina Saldanha referred a complaint from farmers in Arossim to the GSPCB for necessary action. Farmers have complained that sewerage discharged by a starred hotel has made their fields uncultivable.

Addressing GSPCB members, Saldanha said that the farmers have complained of an itching sensation on their legs caused by the sewage dumped in their fields.

She also said that people in Goa are aware of the pollution in their vicinity and that she receives lot of complains with regard to the same.

## **Farmers to develop seed banks to blunt GM push**

About 500-odd organic farmers in Gujarat are trying to develop individual seed banks in a bid to resist the onslaught of genetically modified seeds.

"The farmers are now developing seed bank as a measure against the invasion of genetically modified (GM) seeds," said Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) president Sarvdaman Patel.

The biggest advantage of developing seed banks is reduced cost. A bank of organic seeds will not only ensure reduced cost, but also assure good yield and above all good health to people, said Patel, who owns an organic farm in central Gujarat's Anand district.

"10 gram tomato seeds, for example, cost Rs 400 in the market. But every few

months, a new company emerges in the market with a new, costly hybrid seed, which may guarantee better yield, but not in the longer run," he said.

As and when the farmers succeed in developing the seed bank, they will be taught to store and preserve it in bottles, shelf or any dark place.

"Once they develop seed banks, we (OFAI) have assured them of educating them how to store and utilize these seeds through workshops and seminars across the country," he said.

However, developing seed banks will take time as it involves several selection trials to identify a good quality seed.

"Sometimes it takes two to three years in selection trials, and once the selection trials are over, only then can a quality seed be developed," Patel said. PTI MORE PTI SBC PD GK DV RDS 07010953 NNNN

As of now, some farmers in the state have developed individual seed banks of wheat, rice and some vegetables.

Patel also regretted that the present day farmers were unaware of the old practices and techniques of preserving seeds.

"Today, farmers don't plan which seed they will sow this year. Earlier, farmers used to sow different seeds every year to know which will benefit them the most," he said.

The input cost of organic seeds is just 2 per cent of the production while that of

hybrid seeds is 15 per cent, Patel said, while adding that some north-eastern states, Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand are into organic farming in an elaborate manner.

By default, close to 50 per cent of farmers in the country are into organic farming as they are unable to afford pesticides and chemical fertilisers, he claimed. PTI

### **FDI: Let foreigners invest in retail without conditions**

Now that the stiff conditions attached have deterred foreigners from taking up the government's offer to let them invest in India's fledgling organised retail industry, the government is reportedly toying with a new idea: remove the conditions if the foreign investor is content to hold a stake not higher than 49%. The thought that the conditions need to be removed is entirely sensible and welcome.

The opposite holds true for the proposal to make freedom from preconditions contingent on the foreign investor limiting its stake to 49%. This government staked its majority when it overruled opposition from the secondlargest member of the ruling alliance to open up the retail industry to foreign investment. It is silly for the government to put all kinds of riders on that opening up, only to defeat the policy goal for which it reduced itself to a minority for the remainder of its term.

If the government hopes to nudge the foreign retail companies to buy minority stakes in ongoing domestic ventures, it hopes wrong. For one, it is wrong-headed for the government to continue to dictate investment decisions in such a sector far removed from any strategic concern. For another, a more likely result of such a policy of minority foreign investment being allowed in retail is to create rent-seeking opportunities for some Indians, who would be more than willing to act as proxies for the minority foreign investor. Such proxies, who enter into covenants



that hand over effective control and beneficial rights to the minority investor, in return for a hefty fee, have surfaced in telecom in the past.

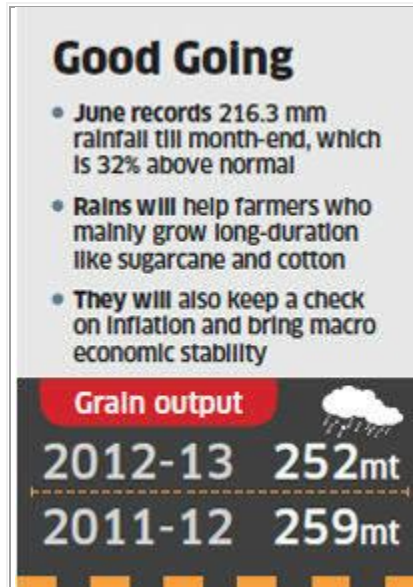
Is it the government's policy to turn retail also into a happy pasture for such proxies? Yet another far-reaching proposal is to open up the retail sector to the extent of 74% of the total investment to foreigners. This is what should be done. Scrap conditions, make simple rules that do not require a consultant to decipher and watch the money pour in. The rupee would give you a thumbs up, so would the real estate industry, besides consumers, and, eventually, farmers who have the sense to acquire organised agency

### **Record rains in June aids power, agricultural output**

Agriculture output is poised to accelerate and power deficits will narrow as the monsoon has begun bountifully in its first month, irrigating fields and filling up reservoirs with the heaviest June rainfall in more than a decade.

Rainfall has been 32% above normal in June, injecting moisture into fields and preparing them for early sowing of kharif crops and reducing the farmer's need for electricity or diesel to pump water into fields.

A heavy rainfall in the Himalayan region has helped key reservoirs such as Bhakra and Tehri accumulate huge reserves of water, much higher than normal. This will help generate more electricity and irrigate fields. Of the 85 main reservoirs across the country, 60 now have 80% of normal storage, which is expected to help rabi crop sowing later in the year. Crop planting has already jumped, according to official data. By June 28, total sown area had jumped to 250.99 lakh hectare from 135.87 hectare at this time last year.



"There has been an unprecedented sowing this year with a good spread of rainfall. If the dry spell is not for a longer duration, we should be looking at a bumper harvest," said AK Sikka, deputy director general (Natural Resource Management), Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Deficient and erratic rains in 2012-13 reduced grain output to 252.36 mt from 259.32 mt in 2011-12.

The four-month-long rainy season began on June 1, recording 216.3-mm rainfall till June 30, which was 32% above normal. According to the MD, it was after 12 years that the country received such heavy rains in June. In 2001, the country received 35.6% normal rainfall at 219 mm in June and it saw a 37.7% above normal rainfall at 219.8 mm way back in 1980.

Monsoon was weak in 2002, 2004, 2009 and 2012, which impacted sowing pattern, yield and production. Apart from increasing acreage, no major change in crop pattern and good production, the rains will also help farmers who mainly grow long-duration crops like cotton, sugarcane and those in rainfed regions to save on labour, diesel and electricity cost to run tube wells.

"Initial signs are good. If the trend continues, it will be beneficial not only for farmers and consumers but for the economy. Our growth rate has slowed down in the last two years. Agriculture can provide the much-needed push. It will also help in keeping a check on inflation and macro economic stability," said Ramesh Chand, director, National Centre for Agricultural Economics and Policy Research, New Delhi. July and August are of extreme importance as the maximum spell of rainfall is received during these months which helps moisten the earth for sowing

and to mature planted crops. A good monsoon is of particular importance for paddy (42% of area is rainfed), which constitutes more than 60% of the kharif crop. "Farmers in Punjab and Haryana exploit water resources and ensure that the crop is good even in a drought year. However, this is not the case in other parts of the country. But we see rains helping farmers immensely in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Chhattisgarh," said Sikka.

### **Central aid to states should be flexible: President Pranab Mukherjee**

Central assistance to any state should have flexibility to address special problems that it might be facing, President Pranab Mukherjee said here today.

At a function to mark birth centenary celebrations of late V P Naik in the backdrop of severe drought faced by the state this year, he recalled the former Chief Minister's speech at the National Development Council where he had opposed any formula-based approach for extending central aid to states.

"For the first time the concept of a formula-based central planned assistance to states was formulated at the time of fourth five-year plan which is known as Gadgil Formula.

"And during formulation of Gadgil Formula, Shri Naik made a speech at National Development Council. He pointed out that there should be adequate flexibility," he said.

Mukherjee said, "a straitjacket formula for central assistance to states may not always take care of special problems which the states may have. And surely many of us who are in the process of formulation and execution of the plan feel that lack of flexibility is not desirable."

Mukherjee said his first meeting with Naik took place when he was Minister of State for Banking and Finance in relation with the establishment of Regional Rural Banks and for providing institutional credits to farmers in rural areas.

The President said he was struck by Naik's knowledge of the conditions in rural India and plight of farmers.

Mukherjee said Naik provided "political and economic stability" in the state at a time of financial turbulence as there was severe crunch of resources in the country.

The President said Shri Naik launched the revolutionary Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which proved to be a boon for millions of farmers ravaged by two major famines in the state.

The Planning Commission later approved the scheme and the same was adopted on national scale and the programme is today known as MNREGA, he said.

### **Water released from Harangi dam**

A week after the crest gates were opened at Kabini dam to manage floodwater, Harangi reservoir on Mysore-Kodagu border opened its sluice gates releasing water into the river on Monday.

Though the quantum of water that has started to flow out of the dam is small — 400 cusecs — what is heartening is that the reservoir with a capacity of 8.50 tmcft has filled to the brim by June end. The water outflow will be stepped up given that the reservoir is receiving over 3,500 cusecs and the dam is one feet

shy of its maximum level of 2,859 ft.

The water resources officials offered puja before all the four crest gates were opened. Unlike last year when famine affected the dam's storage level badly-the mini reservoir rose to the maximum in August and the gates were opened on August 5-rainfall has brought good tidings this monsoon season.

As on Monday, the dam has gross storage of 7.9 tmcft water and the inflow is 3,579 cusecs, which is expected to increase as the rain has picked up in parts of Kodagu. Harangi irrigates 1.50 lakh acres, mainly in Mysore and Hassan districts.

With the four major reservoirs in Cauveru basin in Karnataka getting water at the start of the monsoon season, the focus is now on irrigation with the Karnataka government releasing an estimated 10 tmcft floodwater to Tamil Nadu.

Farmers depending on Kabini dam for their irrigation purpose have protested seeking water while farming community in Mandya, which mainly depends on KRS Dam too is seeking water. Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha leader and Melkote MLA K S Puttannaiah has set July 5 deadline for the authorities to release water for irrigation from KRS dam.

The authorities attached to Harangi dam are planning to release water for irrigation purpose by mid-July, something that Kabini dam will beat as Kapila water is planned to be released into the canals later this week. Sources told TOI 2,000 cusecs is released into the dam from Kabini dam in H D Kote. There is further decrease in the inflow to 5,000 cusecs. But we are maintaining the outflow at 2,000 cusecs for third day in a row. Water to the canals is planned to be

released into the canals later this week, they stated. The reservoir now has gross storage of 17 tmcft. The dam can impound 19.52 tmcft of which 16 tmcft is usable.

Hemavathy dam, which is major reservoir in the Cauvery basin in Karnataka, has gross storage of 12.925 tmcft and it continues to log inflow though it has come down sharply. The inflow on Monday was put at 3,689 cusecs. However, the dam's level has boosted but it is still a long way to go given that Hemavathy's total gross storage is 37.10 tmcft and it has now one-third of its total storage.

The KRS dam is also increasing its storage. It has 16.728 tmcft gross storage, which is some 34 per cent of its total capacity. The dam is getting 5,800 cusecs and releasing 1,452 cusecs

### **Modern machines to help speed up civic body's tree plantation drive**

The Aurangabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) is all set to purchase two modern machines to speed up the ongoing drive of planting 1.5 lakh saplings in the city. Vijay Patil, the AMC's garden superintendent, said on Monday the post hole digger machines would help the civic body plant more saplings in the season. "We have already placed the order for the machines, which will be in our possession in next two-three days," he said.

The civic body initiated the drive in the city from June 5 on the occasion of World Environmental Day and planted saplings in open spaces and road dividers.

Patil said the machines have a capacity to dig 400-500 holes every day for planting saplings. "It is a machine that can be mounted on tractors and operated

by one person. Holes of various sizes can be dug up with ease, which will accelerate the process. At present, we are digging up holes manually that takes a lot of time. A single worker can dig only 15-20 holes in a day, which makes the target of planting 1.5 lakh saplings in the season quite impossible. With the help of these machines, we can now plant more than 1,000 saplings every day," he said.

"The AMC has planted around 17,000-18,000 saplings so far and we have nearly 120 days to achieve the set target," he said.

He said the civic body has planted 10,000 saplings on its own while various schools, colleges, NGOs and individuals helped in planting 7,000-8,000 saplings.

"The civic body would now tap the large area in Chikhalthana and plant about 25,000 saplings. We are also encouraging NGOs and entrepreneurs to participate in the drive," Patil said, adding, "Students of municipal schools are taking active part in the drive. Besides, we are also providing saplings to all the AMC-run hospitals, libraries and offices asking the concerned officers to plant saplings on their premises."

Manisha Choudhary, environmentalist and member of Deepshikha Foundation, said the AMC should not only focus on planting saplings but should also take efforts to make sure that they survive.

### **Huge turnout on day 1 at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University**

The first day of counselling at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) on Monday saw a large number of students with high cut-off marks in attendance. Many of them were those who had missed seats in the medical counselling and opted for agriculture-based courses. The cut-off marks which was fixed at 195,

showed that student's interest in agriculture-based courses remain high. The single window counselling process will continue till June 8.

One major reason that attracts students into agricultural courses is the dream to be a part of the Indian Administrative Services (IAS). K Indira Priyadarshini, a resident of Udumalpettai said that she wants to go for civil services after completing her BSc in agriculture. "I want to become an IAS Officer. I will attempt the examination after completing my graduation," said Priyadarshini, who scored 198.25 marks overall in her science subjects in the Class XII examination.

The dean of agriculture at TNAU, A Rajarajan says agriculture is a popular subject among the students, who wish to appear for the civil services examination. "A good number of those aspirants take up B Sc Agriculture with the aim to become a part of IAS," adds Rajarajan.

The most sought after course is the 4-year-long, B Sc agriculture. Of the 100 seats, around 81 were already filled on the first day of counselling. There are overall 13 undergraduate courses under the TNAU. These include- BSc horticulture, BSc forestry, BSc home science, BTech agricultural engineering, BTech biotechnology, BTech horticulture, BTech food process engineering, BTech energy and environmental engineering, BTech bio-informatics, BSc agribusiness management, BTech agricultural information technology and BSc sericulture. However, admissions to these courses will begin only after the seats in BSc agriculture are full.

"BSc agriculture course is a broad-based course allowing students to take up post-graduation in almost any other branches," said Rajarajan. Therefore, it opens up avenues for several employment opportunities.



Most graduates in BSc agriculture are offered lucrative placements, making it more attractive. "Most students, on completion of the course, get placed in reputed firms," said K Ramasamy, vice chancellor, TNAU. From placements in MNCs to consultancy, options galore for students once they have completed the 4-year course. "For graduates, this course opens up avenues for embarking on several business opportunities," Ramasamy added.

Meanwhile, if students do not wish to pursue civil services examination, take up a job in an MNC or even explore any business opportunities, the doors to get into academics are always open. "Agriculture courses offers scope to take up a dedicated career in academics. Research-based activities can be both rewarding and fulfilling," Ramasamy said. There are several scholarships which the students can make use of, he added.

A Raheem, a student who had come to the counselling said that agricultural courses are popular among his peers. "After medicine, this is said to be the best option. That is why many of us have applied here," he said.

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### **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.

### **Gruel, rice and tamarind water**

*The Kerala government has not learnt anything from the Attappady tragedy. Nutrition levels of women and children, most of them tribals, continue to remain dismal in the area*

At the Agali Community Health Centre in Attappady, Palakkad district, Kerala, Kavitha tends to her four-year-old child lying listlessly on the cot, critically ill. The doctor says the child is severely malnourished. He also says there are eight such infants and children, all suffering from malnutrition, admitted to the centre. This area in Kerala has seen 19 infant deaths in just two months, and 52 deaths of

children due to malnourishment over the last year. These are children of tribal communities which make up 42 per cent of Attappady's population.

Wise men coming here from the governments of Delhi and Thiruvananthapuram have declared that the women do not know how to feed their children properly, they must be educated about nutrition, exclusive breast feeding and weaning. The deaths are due to ignorance, they say.

### **Affordability**

The child's mother looks puzzled when this is put across to her. But we do not have much choice in what we eat, she says, we eat what we can afford to buy. The current diet of a tribal woman in this area is a sort of rice gruel in the morning and rice and tamarind water at night. A locally grown green vegetable may be added, when available, to the night meal. Pulses are a rarity. Kavitha herself looks highly malnourished.

Health department officials say that a woman (given the average height of tribal women in this area) should weigh at least 48 kg before she can bear a child. But most women here weigh just 35 to 38 kg. The third National Family Health Survey in 2005-2006 showed that at the all-India level, 46.6 per cent of tribal women and 41.1 per cent of Dalit women have a body mass index that is below normal. Of these, an alarming 21 per cent of tribal women and 18.5 per cent of Dalit women are moderate/ severely thin. If Attappady is an indication, there has been little improvement.

Before Kavitha was born, her family owned land and grew millets and, sometimes, pulses which helped maintain a certain level of nutrition. As many health officials say, it is not a lack of knowledge but loss of land, which is an important factor behind poor nutrition. In Attappady, as in other parts of India, dispossession of tribals from their land by various methods of land grab has occurred. There is a consequent forced dependence of tribals on a now weakened public distribution system. In Attappady, once the child deaths

became known and the UDF government was held accountable, it was announced that a minimum of 35 kg of foodgrains would be given to each family. But two months later, even those who hold a BPL card like Kavitha get only 25 to 28 kg of foodgrains a month. Two years ago, they used to get pulses, oil, salt at subsidised rates. Not any more. The mantra to cut subsidies implemented by the UDF government in the food, health and anganwadi sectors hits marginalised communities in a hard and cruel way.

### **Drastic cut**

A woman bearing a child with such an elevated level of malnutrition is at high risk as is her baby. In Attappady, the majority of infants who died were pre-term babies or babies with a very low birth weight. Perhaps they could have been saved, in spite of this, had health facilities been available. But of the 1,200 pregnant women who registered in the area last year, only 25 had institutional deliveries. One of the reasons women do not go to health institutions is the drastic cut in the facilities in the last two years. There is a Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme (CHIS) for tribals, which is supposed to cover medicine and other expenses incurred by health institutions on tribal patients. For more than a year, not a single paisa has been released to the hospitals under CHIS. This not only reflects official callousness but also raises questions about the dependence on insurance schemes, instead of strengthening public health services. After the deaths, the State government promised the urgent release of Rs 10 lakh to the Agali CHC. This has not yet materialised. The consequences were being felt by Kavitha's little boy. The doctors present said they were using samples of nutrition feeds for her child which they had been given free but the supply was running out. The only alternative before them was to spend their own money to buy the feed, they said.

## **State of anganwadis**

A public interest litigation plea filed recently in the Kerala High Court paints a shocking picture of the state of anganwadis in Attappady. The food supply for anganwadis was handed over to private contractors by the present government, resulting in rampant corruption. Rotten, inedible food was supplied to children in most of the 172 anganwadis in the area. A Central government team found that the nutrition programme for pregnant women and adolescent girls was not implemented in the last two years. The State had also cut the nutritional requirements by half, cutting out eggs and fruit supplies to the anganwadis. It was only in April, after the furore over the deaths, that the responsibility for supplies was once again given to government agencies.

But it was too late for the children. Even now the situation on the ground in spite of all the announcements has not changed. The doctors fear more deaths. If this can happen in Kerala, what of those States where governments equally committed to neo-liberal policies do not even have a proper monitoring system?

Tribal communities want their land back, they want livelihood not charity. In the last year, in this area the average number of days of work provided under MGNREGS was only 63 days. The concerned Central Minister Jairam Ramesh who visited Attappady after the deaths made a grand statement of allocating Rs 120 crore for the area. It might have been more useful if the Minister had ensured that work, which has come to a standstill, had been provided and workers paid what was owed to them. According to the report of the District Vigilance and Monitoring Council, till the first week of April, delayed wage payments for unskilled workers were as high as Rs 28 lakh. But even those who have been paid subsequently have been denied a minimum wage. The same utterly insensitive mindset that blames a mother's ignorance as the prime reason for her baby's death also holds that it is because workers have become lazy that the stipulated wage rate is not earned.

With low levels of nutrition, women who comprise a large section of the MGNREGS workers in this area find it difficult to complete the tasks set for them. In this case, the piece rates are linked to a norm which requires a worker to dig or lift mud of around 1200 kg a day. Can a woman who herself weighs less than 40 kg, eating once a day, be expected to complete this task?

While the situation in Attappady is particularly bad, the continuing emphasis on earth work in MGNREGS projects across the country, with high and difficult-to-complete productivity norms, makes it virtually impossible for a malnourished labour force to earn a piece rate linked minimum wage. Although the Ministry of Rural Development in its operational guidelines for 2013 has specifically mentioned that in fixing SORs (schedule of rates), levels of nutrition should also be taken into account, this has not been translated into practice. On the contrary, in some States, for example in Andhra Pradesh, the Minister's home State, the SORs were actually raised following the raise in the wage rate. This is a method of neutralising the increased wage rate, depriving the worker of the benefit and saving the government the additional money it would have had to pay.

India along with the sub Saharan Africa region is the only country in the world where the number of very poor people has registered an increase in the last 30 years. According to a recent World Bank study (*The State of the Poor: Where are the Poor and where are the Poorest*), India now accounts for one-third of the world's poorest people — that is those earning around 87 cents, less than Rs 50 a day. In 1981, one-fifth of the world's poorest people lived in India; in 2010, the numbers increased to one-third, around 400 million. Clearly, the government has to make drastic changes and reversals in its present policies to address the issues of deprivation. It should draw the right lessons from the Attappady tragedy because the deaths could have been prevented had the policies been different.

*(Brinda Karat is Polit Bureau member, Communist Party of India-Marxist)*

Weather

Chennai

## Today's Weather



Sunny

Tuesday, Jul 2

Max Min

35° | 27°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:46

Humidity: 52

Sunset: 06:39

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004

## Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Jul 3

Max Min

36° | 27°

## Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Jul 4

Jul 5

Jul 6

Jul 7

Jul 8



37° | 27°

36° | 27°

36° | 26°

35° | 27°

35° | 26°

Cloudy

Overcast

Overcast

Overcast

Overcast

## Airport -weather

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:46

Humidity: 52

Sunset: 06:39

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004



# THE HINDU Business Line

Edible oils flat on thin trade, bearish futures

Edible oils prices in most wholesale markets were flat to down on Monday amid thin trade and bearish futures. Overall sentiment remained negative. Domestic soya oil futures dropped in late trade tracking lower closing of Malaysian palm oil futures. Early monsoon bolstered kharif oilseeds sowing and that weighed on indigenous edible oils. The volume was thin as stockists preferred to fulfil old commitments, said traders.

Sources said during the day hardly 100-150 tonnes of palmolein were resold at Rs 527-528. Except that there were no other activities. Mustard seeds arrivals were 1.30-1.35 lakh bags including 75,000-80,000 bags in Rajasthan and the prices were Rs 3,060-3,525. Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 540, Super palmolein at Rs 575 and super deluxe Rs 595. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 540-545, soyabean refined oil Rs 660-663 and sunflower refined oil Rs 810. In Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled steady at Rs 1,370 for telia tin and Rs 880 for loose (10 kg).

Malaysian BMD crude palm oil's August contracts settled at MYR 2,346 (MYR 2,346), September at MYR 2,343 (MYR 2,344) and October at MYR 2,339 (MYR 2,340).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 910 (920), soya refined oil 660 (660), sunflower exp. ref. 750 (750), sunflower ref. 805 (805), rapeseed ref. oil 688 (690), rapeseed expeller ref. 658 (660) cottonseed ref. oil 658 (658) and palmolein 528 (527).

Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai quoted Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 572 ex-Chennai for 15 days delivery.

## Further fall in prices may hit Bengal potato farmers

The West Bengal Government has 'facilitated' sale of potatoes to Sri Lanka.

Gopal Sadhu Khan - a potato farmer of Abhirampur village in West Bengal's Hughli district – is rueing his decision to hold on to his produce at the beginning of this season. Like him, thousands of farmers in West Bengal, without any price risk hedging mechanism, are distressed.

Nearly 20 per cent of the 59 lakh tonnes of potatoes in the 425 odd cold storages in the State have already made their way into the market in the past one month as despondency grew. Khan produced nearly 600 quintals of potatoes on around 15 bigha (4.95 acre) this season.

He sold around half of it at the beginning of the season at Rs 500-550 a quintal, flaking out a profit of Rs 100-150. The rest of his produce was placed in the cold storages with the hope of a little better price.

"I spent close to Rs 400. I could fetch some surplus over the cost initially. But now the prices have dropped to Rs 400," Khan told Business Line. Moreover, a farmer has to incur additional expenses to the tune of Rs 75-80 if he wants to store the crop; cost of transportation, sorting and grading and cold storage rental charges, all put together. According to Patit Paban De, member of West Bengal Cold Storage Association, the prices were subdued at the beginning of the season owing to overproduction. There has been a 12 per cent rise in potato production in the State to nearly 98 lakh tonnes this year.

### Prices

Over the last fortnight, wholesale price of the tuber (Jyoti variety) in West Bengal dipped by over Rs 100 to Rs 670-700.

"The share of potatoes stored by farmers this year is higher and accounts for nearly 50 per cent of the total quantity kept in cold storages, as compared to 30-

35 per cent during previous year. Of the 20 per cent stock released so far, a majority belonged to the traders. Any further fall in prices will, therefore, hurt the farmers very badly,” De said.

#### State Intervention

Alarmed by the situation, the West Bengal Government has ‘facilitated’ sale of potatoes to Sri Lanka. Attempts are understood to be on to sale potatoes to Assam and Odisha. “We have already sent 500 tonnes of potatoes to Sri Lanka through Tamil Nadu. If required, we will facilitate transportation of more quantities to prevent a price crash,” Pradip Kumar Mazumdar, Agriculture Advisor to the Chief Minister, told Business Line. West Bengal consumes around 50-55 lakh tonnes potatoes while nearly 40 per cent find its way into other States. “Prices will continue to remain at these levels unless the sentiments improve. This might be possible only if the State Government intervenes,” De said.

#### **Nabard scheme to rejuvenate primary agricultural co-ops**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) along with the AP State Co-operative Bank is taking steps to rejuvenate primary agricultural co-operatives (PACs) by converting them into multi-services centres and is providing the necessary financial and other forms of support for the purpose, according to K.R Nair, Chief General Manager in charge of Andhra Pradesh. He was here on Monday to participate in a one-day regional workshop organised by the co-operative department for the purpose.

He said in an interview that “there were more than a lakh PACs in the country and roughly 50-60 per cent of them are functioning well.

However, the PACs are being used only for a single purpose — disbursement of crop loans. They can be used to provide agricultural inputs, implements and to

provide warehousing and other facilities to farmers. They can bring about transformation in rural areas.”

He said Nabard had decided to provide funds to the co-operatives through the State co-operative banks for taking up such multi-purpose activities. “We will lend to the State co-operative banks at 10 per cent and they will, in turn, lend to the PACs at 11 per cent or so and then the PACs can add the requisite margin and lend the money to their members,” he said.

He said that in Andhra Pradesh there were more than 2,700 co-operatives and “our target is to convert at least 25 PACs in each district into such model ones. There are 23 districts in the State and therefore our target is to cover at least 575 PACs in the first phase.”

Nair said that so far Rs 116 crore had been sanctioned in the State for the purpose and Rs 20 crore disbursed to the co-operatives. He said it had been estimated that 626 co-operatives in the State would require Rs 362 crore for the purpose.

However, he said, only co-operatives functioning in the proper manner would be given assistance. There would be no write-offs and the co-operatives should therefore take great care in choosing the right projects. Nabard would also provide them technical guidance.

M.S Rama Rao, Managing Director of APCOB, and senior officials from both Nabard and APCOB addressed representatives of co-operatives from the districts of Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram and Srikakulam.

### **AP farmers can buy subsidised seeds online**

G2F services: A farmer receiving a bag of subsidised seeds from Digvijay Singh (left), AICC General Secretary , in-charge of AP, Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar

Reddy and Minister for Agriculture Kanna Lakshminarayana (right), in Hyderabad on Monday. — P.V. Sivakumar

Forget about B2B, B2C and other such abbreviations that denote electronically deliverable conversations and services between businesses to consumers and business to businesses.

Farmers in Andhra Pradesh are calling it G2F or Government-to-farmer services. They need not stand in serpentine queues and wait for hours, and sometimes days, to get their packet of seeds. They now can book their slot using Mee Seva, the Government-to-citizen service offered through 7,000 centres. “Mee Seva system will be utilised for distribution of subsidy seeds under various programmes. The seed supplying agencies will ensure the availability of seeds as per the bookings made these centres. Issues related to crop subsidy too could be handled using this service,” Ponnala Lakshmaiah, Andhra Pradesh Minister for IT, said. The Government organised a meeting on Monday to commemorate completion of two crore transactions under Mee Seva service. “Of the two crore, 70 lakh applications have been cleared in 15 minutes.” Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy and Digvijay Singh, who is in-charge of AP’s Congress affairs, took part in the meeting. Mee Seva would also take care of certain services such as reconnaissance permit, mining lease and granite quarry lease (in Mining Department); renewal of establishment and issuance of duplicate certificates (Labour Dept); and age certificate, duplicate memo, re-counting of marks and migration certificate (Education Certificate), the Minister said after the event.

Monsoon: The best June in 12 years

This June has turned out to be the best ever for the Indian monsoon in the past 12 years.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the country has received an area-weighted rainfall of 216.3 mm, which was 32.3 per cent higher than the 'normal' or historical long-period average (LPA) for the month. The last time it rained so much in June was in 2001, with the all-India average of 219 mm. In all, there have been only eight years since the start of the 20th century, which have received more rains in June than the month that just went by: 1980 (219.8 mm), 1978 (218.1 mm), 1971 (240.6 mm), 1938 (277.2 mm), 1936 (252.1 mm), 1917 (218.1) and 1916 (233.8 mm).

A good June need not, however, translate into a good monsoon season as such. The year 2002 saw June receive 9.4 per cent surplus rainfall (vis-à-vis the LPA). But, 2002 witnessed a bad drought, with the monsoon season (from June to September) ending with a deficit of 19.2 per cent. The same thing happened in 2004, when there was only a marginal shortfall of 0.8 per cent in June, but the season ended with a 13.8 per cent deficit.

The last drought year in 2009 witnessed the worst ever June with a 47.2 per cent rainfall deficit. The worst case scenario this year could be if a repeat of 2002 happens. That year witnessed surplus rains in June but a severe deficit of 54.2 per cent in July, making it the worst ever in the country's meteorological history for that month. Good rains in June usually spur large-scale early sowing by farmers. But if the July rains falter, the crop that has been sown early may experience moisture stress, affecting its vegetative growth. That happened in 2002, and the hope now is that it will not repeat itself this month. The IMD has predicted normal rains for July and August this year. Rainfall is expected to be 101 per cent of LPA for July and 96 per cent of LPA for August.

# Business Standard

**Guj organic farmers to develop seed banks**

**The biggest advantage of developing seed banks is reduced cost**

About 500-odd organic farmers in Gujarat are trying to develop individual seed banks in a bid to resist the onslaught of genetically modified seeds. "The farmers are now developing seed bank as a measure against the invasion of genetically modified (GM) seeds," Organic Farming Association of India (OFAI) president Sarvdaman Patel said.

The biggest advantage of developing seed banks is reduced cost. A bank of organic seeds will not only ensure reduced cost, but also assure good yield and above all good health to people, said Patel, who owns an organic farm in central Gujarat's Anand district.

"10 grams tomato seed, for example, costs Rs 400 in the market. But every few months, a new company emerges in the market with a new, costly hybrid seed, which may guarantee better yield but not in the longer run," he said. As and when the farmers succeed in developing the seed bank, they will be taught to store and preserve it in bottles, shelf or any dark place. "Once they develop seed banks, we (OFAI) have assured them of educating them how to store and utilise these seeds through workshops and seminars across the country," he said.

However, developing seed banks will take time as it involves several selection trials to identify a good quality seed. "Sometimes it takes two to three years in selection trials, and once the selection trials are over, only then can a quality

seed be developed," Patel said. As of now, some farmers in the state have developed individual seed banks of wheat, rice and some vegetables.

Patel also regretted that the present day farmers were unaware of the old practices and techniques of preserving seeds. "Today, farmers don't plan which seed they will sow this year. Earlier, farmers used to sow different seeds every year to know which will benefit them the most," he said. The input cost of organic seeds is just 2 per cent of the production while that of hybrid seeds is 15 per cent, Patel said.

Punjab area under 'direct paddy' to rise 2.5 times

Area under direct seeding for paddy in state may touch 50,000 hectares in the ongoing kharif season

Having got wider acceptance from farmers across the state, the area under direct seeding for paddy in Punjab is likely to touch 50,000 hectares in the ongoing kharif season, a two-and-half-fold rise on the last year. Direct seeding was on 20,000 hectares last year.

Direct seeding of paddy can save 25-30 per cent of water in the fields. It involves direct sowing of seeds in the field. As a result, the yield per hectare rises. Besides, it reduces cultivation cost by Rs 5,000-6,000 a hectare. Traditionally, paddy is grown by planting seeds in a small nursery and then the saplings are transplanted after four weeks to the cultivation area. The saplings are allowed to grow and the fields are kept under three to four inches of water, to reduce weed growth. This 'puddle irrigation' needs a lot of water. Since paddy cultivation is water-intensive, this has resulted in a decline of the water table in Punjab. Direct seeding has the environmental benefit of reducing emission of greenhouse gases



such as methane. Also, it improves soil porosity that can raise productivity of the succeeding crop.

Mangal Singh Sidhu, director, agriculture department of Punjab, said the state had started a campaign to make farmers aware about the benefits of direct paddy plantation. Apart from that government was also providing financial benefits to farmers and National Food Security Mission for direct paddy plantation. In Punjab, acting on the recommendations of Ludhiana-based Punjab Agricultural University not only the state government is making efforts to reach out to farmers for wider acceptance of the technology but also corporates, NGOs and even farmers are actively promoting this technology. With combined efforts the state government is hopeful that the total area under this methodology would may cross 50,000 hectares during this season. It is expected that in the the current season 27.50 lakh hectare areas would be covered under paddy cultivation, against 28.18 lakh hectares during the last season.

It is worth mentioning that in order to popularise the technology, Pepsico India in 2006, started the direct seeding methodolgy and carried out trial in the fields of 12 farmers, covering about 20 acres and now it covers about over thousands of acres under this technology. Also, Bayer Crop Science, India and Punjab State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation (Markfed) signed a formal MoU in 2010 to collaborate to promote and develop complete package of Direct Seeded Rice in the state to save depleted water.

**Chana up 0.7% on better spot demand**

**Chana for delivery in July gained 0.74%**

Chana prices rose by Rs 25 to Rs 3,189 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions on good demand in the spot market. At the National Commodity Derivatives Exchange, chana for August contract rose by Rs 25, or 0.79%, to Rs 3,189 per quintal, with an open interest of 1,43,620 lots. Similarly, chana for delivery in July gained Rs 23, or 0.74%, to Rs 3,117 per quintal, with an open interest of 87,510 lots. Analysts said increased buying by speculators on good demand in the spot market mainly led to a rise in chana futures prices.

**Coriander gains 1.1% on strong demand**

**Coriander for delivery in July traded higher by 1.10%**

Coriander prices gained 1.12% to Rs 6,692 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions, supported by pick-up in spot demand. The sentiment improved further due to limited stocks position on restricted arrivals from the major growing belts.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, coriander for August gained Rs 74, or 1.12%, to Rs 6,692 per quintal, with an open interest of 15,930 lots. Similarly, coriander for delivery in July traded higher by Rs 72, or 1.10%, to Rs 6,609 per quintal, with an open interest of 17,760 lots. Market analysts said increased buying by speculators, driven by pick up in spot market demand against less arrivals from producing belt mainly helped coriander prices to rise at futures trade.

**Cardamom down 2.4% on profit-bookings**

**Cardamom for delivery in August shed by 1.36%**

Cardamom prices fell by 2.47% to Rs 744 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels, driven by subdued demand in the spot market.

Adequate stocks availability in the physical market on account of higher supply from the producing belts also put pressure on the cardamom prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in July declined by Rs 18.90, or 2.47%, to Rs 744 per kg, with a business turnover of 1,693 lots. Likewise, cardamom for delivery in August shed Rs 10.70, or 1.36% to Rs 773.60 per kg, with a trading volume of 1,080 lots. Market analysts said subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position mainly kept pressure on the cardamom prices at futures trade. They said, sentiment weakened further as the traders booked profits at the prevailing levels in the midst of a subdued demand for the commodity.

#### **Potato down 1.3% on less demand**

#### **Potato for July delivery fell by 1.34%**

Potato prices fell by 1.34% to Rs 823 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded their positions driven by subdued demand in the spot market. Increased supplies in the physical market following persistent arrivals from producing region against lower demand led to the fall in potato futures prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for July delivery fell by Rs 11.20, or 1.34%, to Rs 823 per quintal, with a business volume of 11 lots.

Potato for delivery in August slipped by Rs 8.70, or 1.10%, to Rs 775.50 per quintal, with a trading volume of 29 lots. Marketmen said fall in potato prices was mostly due to offloading of positions by speculators, driven by subdued demand in the spot market.

Crude palm oil up 1.1% on strong spot demand

Crude palm oil for delivery in August moved up by 1%

Crude palm oil prices rose by 1.18% to Rs 504.90 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions on the back of rising demand in spot market demand amid firming trend overseas. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for July delivery rose by Rs 5.90, or 1.18%, to Rs 504.90 per 10 kg, with a trading volume of 87 lots.

Similarly, palm oil for delivery in August moved up by Rs 5, or 1%, to Rs 505.80 per 10 kg, with a business turnover of 63 lots. Globally, in Malaysia, palm oil advanced as much as 1.20% to \$750 a tonne on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange. Analysts said the rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade was mostly attributed to fresh positions created by speculators on rising demand in spot market demand and a firming trend overseas as exports from Malaysia, the world's second-largest producer, climbed.