



More farmers, fishermen to tap information on monsoon and markets over mobiles

*MSSRF launches second phase of 'Knowledge Connectivity Programme,'
FM station*

The M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) has launched the second phase of its successful IT-driven rural empowerment initiative to help more farmers and fishermen in Nagapattinam and Karaikal districts.

Ever since it was rolled out in 2011-12, the 'Knowledge Connectivity Programme' supported by MARG Karaikal Port has benefited about 20,000 farmers, fishermen and women entrepreneurs of self-help groups in 34 villages by providing relevant inputs through advisories over mobile phone, helpline and phone-in facilities.

The second phase of the project will see the benefits of leveraging mobile phone penetration spread to a larger number of beneficiaries and the launch of a community FM station to disseminate information to fishermen who have found that they are unable to receive inputs on their phones once they enter the deep seas beyond 12 nautical miles.

A cluster approach to promote cultivation of paddy, groundnut, vegetables and coconut and developing a base of 60 Master Trainers from the communities to impart knowledge to others are also proposed.

M.S. Swaminathan, who launched a compendium of success stories of the project, said the initiative had been successful in equipping farmers with information relating to monsoon and markets.

The project has touched the lives of these people and raised their productivity levels by increasing confidence through acquiring new knowledge and skills, updating existing skill sets and blending science with traditional knowledge.

Farmers have benefited from inputs on wind direction and speed, warnings and market information.

For Sivasankaran, a beneficiary, the GPS on mobile phones has become indispensable for fishermen. The project did not confine itself to dissemination of useful inputs, but involved interventions such as career guidance for the children of fishermen, he said. Kalai Selvi, member of a SHG in Akkirampettai, explained how access to information on animal husbandry aspects helped her cure the fractured leg of a neighbour's goat.

The woman entrepreneur, who had undergone several training sessions at MSSRF on preparation of soap oil, frankincense powder and flower wash, plans to improve the quality of her products “so that they are better than those available in the market.”

Horticulture Department to set up 50 farm-fresh outlets in Chennai

Following the footsteps of the Co-operative Department, the State Horticulture Department will set up 50 farm-fresh vegetable outlets in the city to supply vegetables below market prices.

The Tamil Nadu Horticulture Producers Co-operative Enterprises Ltd (TANHOPE) has already floated a company – Chennai Horticulture Produce Producers Company Ltd (CHPPCL) – for implementing the project in the Chennai peri-metro area. Interestingly, the scheme was sanctioned in 2011-12 with an investment of Rs. 17 crore. It was followed by creation of 254 clusters with 4,970 farmers. However, the project could not take-off due to non-availability of aggregators. Aggregators are those who run the entire supply-chain management to keep the vegetables fresh as per the guidelines of small farmer agri-business consortium. The aggregator can either be a co-operative society, cluster of farmers, existing agencies and leading farmers or traders.

The department plans to have 10 aggregators for five collection centres – Chennai, Kancheepuram, Tiruvallur, Vellore and Tiruvannamalai – to create

a healthy and competitive environment. The aggregators will be given two trucks – a six-tonne truck and a one-tonne vehicle – for transporting vegetables. They will also have access to two mobile vending vehicles, sources said.

As per the proposed plan, about 20 farmers will form a cluster to supply their produce to collection centres at the district level. Private markets' aggregators will collect, sort, grade and pack the produce at their locations and supply it to retail outlets in the city. The procurement price will be paid to farmers the same day.

Talking to *The-Hindu*, a top official said: "In the next three to four days, we will issue expression of interest (Eoi) inviting aggregators to take part in the project. Prior to that, we will have a meeting to know their requirements as these aggregators will be the vital link between farmers and consumers. Eventually, the plan is to have 100 farm-fresh outlets in the city."

No more poultry farmers in Manipur after six months

In the next six months, there will be no poultry farmers in Manipur, notwithstanding the fact that almost all families in the State are meat eaters.

This is because the farmers can no longer compete with the traders who import live chickens from Assam and other States that sell chicken at much cheaper rates. This was stated by Kulachandra H., president of All Manipur

Poultry Farmers' Association, while talking to journalists on Saturday night. In the last three months, prices of chicken have been jacked up to Rs. 300 per kg or more.

Militants exacting money

Militants have also been exacting various taxes from all items transported along the highways, leading to the rise in prices of chicken feed.

Mr. Kulachandra has stated that most chicken shops have already been closed down due to lack of sales.

Eco imbalance leading to natural disasters'

Natural resources should be optimally utilised, says Minister Ramachandraiah



CLOSE MONITORING:Endowments Minister C. Ramachandraiah and Collector K. Sasidhar take a look at agricultural produce displayed in Moolavanka on Sunday.– Photo: By arrangement

The deliberate destruction of nature by human beings led to ecological imbalance, which in turn, led to the natural disaster in Char Dham, Minister for Endowments, C. Ramachandraiah, said on Sunday.

Natural resources should be optimally utilised for improving one's lifestyle but felling trees can be perilous, he said after launching Yeruvaka Pournima programme at Moolavanka in Chintakommadinne mandal. He lamented that farmers were in dire straits and unable to fix the prices of their agriculture products while businessmen were deciding the prices of goods sold by them.

Mr. Ramachandraiah instructed officials to enlighten farmers on technical know-how and modern agricultural implements.

Scientists and astrologers have indicated that there will be good rainfall this year, the Minister said and urged farmers to be confident. He recalled that such a programme was implemented at the time of Vijayanagar emperor Srikrishnadevarayalu's rule.

District Collector K. Sasidhar promised to resolve land issues in Kadapa district within the next 30 days. Crop loans were disbursed among 1,000 farmers out of the annual target of disbursement to 10,000 farmers, he said.

There is adequate stock of seed and fertilisers and they are being distributed through the Agros and District Cooperative Market Society, he said. He called upon farmers to come forward to utilise Yantralakshmi tools.

Crops were raised in one lakh acres using organic fertilisers, Mr. Sasidhar said. Such agricultural products are fetching higher price than others in the district and selling them at Hyderabad would fetch more income, he said.

Assuring market linkage with Hyderabad, he said farmers should get their produce certified in order to sell it there.

He told farmers to utilise welfare schemes, avail subsidies and gain awareness of modern farming tools.

Farmers should strive to get higher yield by cutting down costs, Joint Collector K. Nirmala said.

Kadapa DCMS Chairman Vishnuvardhan Reddy, Joint Director of Agriculture Narasimhulu, Deputy Director of Farmer Training Centre Chandrasekhar, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry S. Venkata Rao, Kadapa RDO V. Veerabrahmam, Yeruvaka scientist Padmodaya, DOT Centre scientist Veeraiah and other officials participated.

Proposed cut in levy rice procurement comes as a dampner



Andhra Pradesh is one of the largest contributors of levy rice to the Central pool as also the primary source of boiled rice supplied through

the public distribution system in neighbouring States such as Kerala.–

File Photo: A.V.G. Prasad

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The Union Food Ministry's proposed move to cut down the procurement of levy rice from 75 per cent to 25 per cent has come as a shocker for the State government as well as the rice millers.

Andhra Pradesh is one of the largest contributors of levy rice to the Central pool as also the primary source of boiled rice supplied through the public distribution system in neighbouring States such as Kerala. While senior Civil Supplies officials are concerned over the impact the cut in levy will have on the PDS system here, the millers on their part are keeping their fingers crossed as any step towards cut in levy procurement will infuse volatility in the pricing pattern.

The quantum of procurement of levy rice, mostly raw rice for the PDS, from millers involves an estimated Rs. 16,000 crore with millers as well as farmers getting at least the minimum support price, if not remunerative prices, for their produce. The State has contributed 80 lakh tonne under levy last season of which close to 45 lakh tonne were supplied to the PDS system while another 30 lakh tonne of boiled rice went to Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Cutting down the levy by two-thirds would, in turn, result in an equal drop in the quantum hitting the farmers and millers adversely.

“Small and marginal farmers with no holdings will suffer the most as their margins will be severely hit,” a senior official told *The Hindu* .

The cut in levy procurement by one third from 75 per cent to 25 per cent will certainly lead to cartelisation and formation of syndicates by millers who will in turn decide the procurement price. “How can there be a control on price pattern when millers are permitted to sell 75 per cent of the commodity in open market?”, he asked.

The development is unlikely to have any major impact on the price of finer varieties like sona masuri. But the small income groups and people dependent on the PDS will bear the brunt as a major chunk of the levy rice comprises coarse varieties. “Finer varieties are once a year crops whereas the farmers opt for coarse varieties as they can be grown twice a year if the conditions are favourable,” the official said.

Rice millers on their part remained tight-lipped as they too appeared unprepared for the cut as reduction in levy will take with it the assurance of procurement by the government agencies.

“This will come into effect from October 1 when the kharif marketing season starts. The government should relax the movement of rice within and outside the country if it is indeed firm on cutting down the levy,” Rice Millers Association president A. Lakshminarayana said. Millers will not be in a position to purchase paddy/rice from growers if the existing restrictions on its movement are not removed. The cut in levy would have twin effects of glut in market affecting the prices of rice and slowdown in procurement by

millers who will first need to explore ways of disposing of the commodity as and when they make purchases from the growers.

While State officials are concerned over the impact on the PDS here, millers are keeping their fingers crossed as any move to reduce levy procurement will infuse volatility in the pricing pattern

Tariff order disappoints farmers, textile mills

Farmers and textile mills here have expressed disappointment over the tariff order issued by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Regulatory Commission (TNERC) on June 20.

Opposing the hike in tariff, State president of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangham M. R. Sivasamy told *The Hindu* on Saturday that there is no free power to anyone now. Farmers are getting free power supply because the State government is paying the charges.

If the subsidy requirement keeps on increasing and the government is unable to bear it in future, farmers might have to pay the tariff.

The TNERC hiked the subsidy quantum only for agricultural and hut connections.

When there was power shortage, farms had supply only for three hours a day.

Even now, there is power cut for about an hour. One of the main demands of the farmers' association was amendment to the electricity Act so that

State governments could provide free power supply to agricultural connections if they want to, Mr. Sivasamy said. This would be reiterated at the annual meeting of the association next month.

Southern India Mills' Association chairman S. Dinakaran said in a release that the association welcomed the TNERC order with regard to reduction of wheeling charges. However, it has appealed to the commission to roll back the cross subsidy surcharge for High Tension (HT) consumers.

These consumers were purchasing third party power on a 24-hour basis as power generation using diesel generators was expensive. Increase in cross subsidy surcharge would hit the manufacturing units, he said.

Good news for farmers



Water released from Krishnagiri Reservoir Project dam flowing towards Barur lake on Sunday. —Photo: N. Bashkaran

Farmers sceptical of farm pond work under job scheme

'Quality of work done under MGNREGS suspect for want of monitoring'

While there was a unanimous plea to remove silt from the water bodies, scepticism was obvious at the agriculturists' grievances day here on Friday whether the workers enrolled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) would be able to accomplish the task.

A number of speakers, including R. Ulaganathan, District Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam; P. Pichai Pillai of All India Farmers' Association; and Ambedkar of Pazhur panchayat union lamented that silt removal was not done for many years in the district. It was imperative to deepen them and strengthen the bunds of the tanks, they pleaded. Besides, hyacinth that affected the smooth flow of water should be removed.

Mr. Ambedkar pointed out that Pullambadi canal alone had 24 tanks and one of these tanks had an ayacut of 6,800 acres. Once silt was removed from the water sources, they could store substantial quantum of water and irrigate thousands of acres, he added.

However, R. Sengamuthu, president of the District Farmers' Association, and N. Jayachandran, a veteran farmer of Aandimadam, wondered the MNREGS workers would be able to do such works. The former alleged that most of the works entrusted to these workers had not been done properly because of poor monitoring and these workers had not been paid the full daily wage of Rs. 148 in some places. Specifying a worker who died in harness, he pleaded that the families of such persons should be assisted

by the Government. The latter said as the proposed silt removal work should be completed before the arrival of monsoon, it would be ideal to deploy earth movers which would be able to accomplish the task within six hours. "The MNREGS workers would take several weeks for completing the same," he said.

K. Nagarathinam of T. Pazhur suggested that a board giving the details of the project, including the amount allocated and the number of workers engaged, should be put up at the project site ahead of the commencement of the project. This would help the villagers monitor it.

Mr. Sengamuthu, referring to the decision of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, to provide various assistance to delta farmers, especially the agri inputs at subsidised rates, suggested that it would be better if the State government announced an incentive for production of paddy per kg. Thus the farmers would be enthused to produce more. Other assistance such as inputs were not so effective in achieving the objective, he said.

Mr. Ulaganathan, who pointed out that four persons in the district had died of kidney failure, wanted Collector M. Ravikumar, who was in the chair, to inspect the packaged drinking water units and the restaurants, because these persons could have died of water contamination. Besides, the overhead tanks (OHT) in the panchayats should be properly cleaned. "How is that white washing these tanks cost as much as Rs. 90,000 each?" he wondered.

He pleaded for constituting a committee to supervise this work.

Mr. Pichai Pillai charged the government hospitals of failing to provide pure water.

Mr. Jeyachandran alleged that even those cashew farmers who had insured their crops had not received the compensation. “Neither do we (cashew growers) get bank loan for sinking borewells,” he said.

Coconut can be a lucrative option: farm varsity V-C

Coconut cultivation can yield remunerative results through effective mechanisation, plant protection, and value addition, suggested a recently conducted seminar-cum-training programme on coconut cultivation and modern technologies, organised jointly under the aegis of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Sikkal, and Coconut Research Station, Veppakulam, here in Vedaranyam.

Briefly touching upon the constraints faced by Cauvery Delta farmers, Dr. K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU, Coimbatore, in his keynote address spoke of technology-based diversification of cultivation. He stressed the need for selecting exclusive high-yielding coconut varieties for tender coconut, and copra production with high oil content and value addition.

Farmers were urged to form the coconut producers’ organisation with the support extended by NABARD. In a move to diversification, the Vice-Chancellor urged farmers to venture into production of value-added products from coconut through “secondary agriculture approach”.

Coconut is cultivated in all the districts of Tamil Nadu with Cauvery Delta Zone contributing to about 62,000 hectares of land. Nagapattinam holds

about 4,100 hectares of land under coconut cultivation predominantly in Veppankulam coastal area.

Chairing the seminar, Collector T. Munusamy spoke. The training programme on coconut production technologies employed the use of visual aids by the scientists of Coconut Research Station, Veppankulam. The sessions entailed demonstrations on coconut manure, plant protection, root feeding of TNAU coconut tonic and use of TNAU coconut climber under the aegis of the scientists of KVK, Sikkal, were organised by the KVK, Sikkal, Nagapattinam scientists.

Release 10 tmcft of water, Congress farmers' wing pleads with Siddaramaiah

The Tamil Nadu Kisan-Khet Mazdoor Congress, a wing of the Congress, has appealed to Karnataka to release 10 tmcft. of water in the Cauvery for the drinking water needs of Tamil Nadu.

Puliyur A. Nagarajan, State vice-president of the unit, in a memorandum to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, said the South West Monsoon had started showering its bounty on Kerala and Karnataka resulting in copious inflows into the reservoirs like the Kabini, Krishnaraja Sagar, Harangi, and Hemavathi.

At the same time, Tamil Nadu had been quenching the thirst of almost 50 per cent of its population by sinking giant borewells along the banks of the Cauvery at 45 locations. Hence, 10 tmcft of water was required for these drinking water projects alone. However, the Mettur dam could not be

opened for more than three months even for drinking water needs because of inadequate storage. This had resulted in serious drinking water shortage in Salem, Erode, Namakkal, and Karur districts apart from lower delta regions.

“Around 20 km radius along the river course in these districts look totally parched. Besides, lakhs of coconut trees, mango trees and annual crops like banana and sugarcane had withered.”

The major reason for such a scenario was the borewells sunk for the sake of drinking water. Hence, Karnataka Chief Minister should release water in the Cauvery as a ‘gesture of good will’ considering the fact that the water level in Mettur dam had slumped to almost 16 ft and the storage to just three tmcft , an unprecedented situation in the annals of the reservoir.

Mr. Nagarajan also requested Mr. Siddaramiah to comply with the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal Award by releasing 10 tmcft during June, 30 tmcft during July, 50 tmcft during August and 44 tmcft during September for Tamil Nadu, well before the onset of the North East Monsoon.

The stand of Karnataka that it would not release water till its reservoirs were filled to the brim was in violation of the Supreme Court order, he contended. Karnataka by denying water to Tamil Nadu during 2012-13 season has affected agriculture in as many as 14.75 lakh acres in the delta districts and another 2.5 lakh acres in districts of Tiruchi, Karur, Namakkal, Salem, and Erode.

Around 105 lakh tonnes of paddy production was lost due to lack of water.

Besides, annual crops such as banana, coconut, and sugarcane had been seriously hurt resulting in a loss of Rs 10,000 crore. Hence, Karnataka should release 192 tmcft to Tamil Nadu as stipulated by the tribunal.

He appealed to Mr. Siddaramaiah to adopt a “humanitarian approach” considering the pathetic plight of the people of Tamil Nadu and release water immediately.

Organic farming: Krishna Byre Gowda plans new campaign

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda has said that the government would do away with the previous government’s campaign for organic farming and start again through the Department of Agriculture.

He was speaking to presspersons at Raichur Agriculture University here on Sunday.

“We do support organic farming. But, we don’t want it in the way that the previous government was doing. The previous government had floated a separate organisation that was seemingly a part of their party-building tactic. Contrary to that, we would take up a new campaign for organic farming through the Department of Agriculture,” he said.

Speaking about the new technologies that were coming up in the agriculture sector, the Minister said special initiatives would be taken up for the farmers.

“New technologies were coming up in the farming sector, but they were largely confined to agriculture universities. Now we will take up special

initiatives to reach them to farmers. The universities should not confine themselves to their campus, rather they should go beyond and reach the farmers,” he said.

The Minister promised to keep a watch on the sub-standard seeds and fertilizers that would possibly penetrate into the market.

“Some consignments of fake seeds that were being attempted to be smuggled into the State from Andhra Pradesh were seized and seven people were arrested. Seizing and arresting people cannot be a permanent solution. We would go to the root of the problem,” he said.

The Minister said he would, if needed, consult Andhra Pradesh government and ask them to take actions against those indulging in seed smuggling.

Mr. Gowda said he would try to do away with the imbalance between the burden on agriculture universities and their insufficient infrastructure and manpower. “There had been a gap between the responsibilities entrusted on agriculture universities and the infrastructure and human resources they had. We will try to do away with this imbalance,” he added.

B.V. Patil, Vice-Chancellor of the varsity, was present

Seed Farm adopting organic methods



Clean food:Paddy cultivation completely relying on organic farming techniques, in progress on the premises of the Seed Farm at Karanthakad in Kasaragod district.

With Kasaragod having declared an organic district, the State-owned Seed Farm here has decided keep all chemical fertilizers and pesticides away from its 25-acre paddy field at Karanthakad this season.

The Farm cultivates paddy to supply hybrid seeds to farmers. Deviating from its earlier practice, the Farm this year is to adopt organic farming techniques.

It is using hybrid 'Aishwarya' seeds for cultivation using traditional organic manure like cow dung and Neem cakes that are known to give higher yield.

The paddy cultivation, which once reflected the dignity of the farming community in the State, has dwindled considerably over the years owing to poor market prices coupled with mounting cost of both labourer, which is in acute shortage, and chemical fertilizers.

However, braving all odds, the Seed Farm is going organic this year, which should inspire the micro landholders in the district blessed with natural resources in abundance.

Fertiliser shortage, price rise hit paddy season



Shortage of phosphoric acid resulted in FACT cutting Factamfos production by nearly half at its Kochi and Udyogamandal divisions.— FILE PHOTO

Though blessed with abundant rains, the new paddy season has been hit by a shortage of supply of mixed fertilisers and a steep rise in their prices.

The price of Factamfos (ammonium phosphate sulphate) from Fertilisers and Chemicals Travancore Limited (FACT) has gone up from Rs.480 per 50 kg bag last year to Rs.900 a bag now, said a farmer based in Palakkad.

He said the supply of the mixed fertiliser, a favourite with farmers across South India, has been short since May. Though the supply situation had eased a bit, it was the rise in price that posed problems to farmers, he said.

Sources in the public sector fertiliser company here said a severe shortage of phosphoric acid had resulted in FACT cutting Factamfos production by nearly half at its Kochi and Udyogamandal divisions.

Company sources said sale of the mixed fertilisers, a major source of revenue, had been brisk over the past few months with a total of 35,000 tonnes having been sold in South India till early June.

Factamfos is a wide spectrum fertiliser used in paddy and sugar cane cultivation. Sales have been high in Kerala and Karnataka where the rains have been abundant, sources said.

The normal Factamfos production is more than 1,500 tonnes a day. However, the shortage of phosphoric acid had resulted to production being curtailed to around 1,000 tonnes a day. FACT has two facilities for Factamfos production — the Udyogamandal division with a capacity of 500 tonnes a day and the Kochi division with a capacity of 1,200 tonnes a day.

Meanwhile, Palakkad district, where paddy is a key crop, has seen heavy rains inundating around 100 hectares in Alathur and Kuzhalamannam areas. Paddy sowing picked up quickly from June 1 with total sown area going up to more than 17,000 hectares in the third week of June. The district had a total of 48,000 hectares cultivated under Virippu paddy last season.

Farmers are the backbone of economy, says Chiru

Calls upon electorate to support Congress in civic, PR elections



FARMER-FRIENDLY: Clad in traditional attire, Union Minister K. Chiranjeevi tilling at Etukuru village in Guntur district during the Yeruvaka programme held on Sunday.— Photo: T. Vijaya Kumar

Union Minister for Tourism K. Chiranjeevi called upon the electorate support Congress in the ensuing municipal and Panchayat elections saying that it is the only party that thinks and works for people's welfare.

It is particularly concerned with the plight of farmers and is taking necessary steps to save them further troubles.

Addressing a public meeting as part of 'Yeruvaka' programme held here on Sunday, Mr. Chiranjeevi said farmers continue to be the backbone of the economy and the development that was achieved could be considered real only when one can see smiles on the faces of farmers.

He suggested to the farmers to remember that the credit of waiving crop loans amounting to Rs. 64,000 crore goes to the UPA Government.

It has also increased the Minimum Support Price for various crops and took other measures in the interest of farmers but for whose toiling in the agricultural fields the economy would not progress.

UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress Vice-President Rahul Gandhi were all for welfare of farmers and they would readily accept any proposal aimed at strengthening the agriculture sector.

The Central and the State Governments have always promptly responded when natural calamities struck the farmers.

Union Minister of State for Finance J.D. Seelam, Rural Development Minister Dokka Manikya Vara Prasada Rao, MP Rayapati Sambasiva Rao, Ministers Kasu Venkata Krishna Reddy and Vatti Vasanth Kumar and others were present.

Farmers demand proper upkeep of channels

A section of farmers have urged the district administration to take action for proper maintenance, particularly for lifting the silt in irrigation channels and minor tanks in the district before October so as to ensure prompt utilisation of rainwater during the North East monsoon.

G.S. Dhanapathy, district chairman of Farmers Forum of India, underlined the importance of minor tanks under the maintenance of panchayat unions.

He said the district administration should take action for harvesting rainwater and its prompt utilisation for irrigation.

He said steps should be taken to curb the monkey menace in several parts of the district.

Ideal season

Appavu Balandar, another farmer, said the current dry season was ideal for clearing the silt and deepening the irrigation and supply channels. A comprehensive plan should be evolved and implemented on a war-footing, he said.

Rama Theerthan, a progressive farmer, pleaded for a comprehensive plan for resolving the drinking water crisis in rural parts of the district.

C. Manoharan, District Collector, who presided over the meeting, advised the Revenue and Agriculture department officials to ensure coordinated action for assessing relief to farmers who lost their crop because of failure of monsoon.

He advised farmers to submit their petitions at the taluk offices.

On the monkey menace, the Collector said the Agriculture Department would identify the menace-prone areas.

The Forest Department would set up cages to be made by the TANSI. Priority had been attached to resolving the drinking water crisis in Keeranur.

Under the Mahatama Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, farm ponds would be set up at 704 places.

Work had been taken up at 160 sites.

Referring to a plea for clearing the encroachments on tanks, the Collector said that action had been taken and the encroachments were being cleared regularly

Award-winning farmers felicitated



Special Arrangement Farmers of the Akampadam Chimbachala Padasekhara Samithy at a function at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Thrissur on Saturday

National Plant Genome Awards for 2012 presented; farmers felicitated

Farmers from the State who won the national plant genome awards for 2012 were felicitated at a function at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra here on Saturday.

Kerala Agricultural University had sponsored and recommended the awardees. The awards were instituted by the Protection of Plant Varieties

and Farmers' Right (PPV&F R) Authority. Addressing the function, P.C. Chacko, MP, said the Union government hoped to convene a special session of Parliament to pass the Food Security Act.

Farmers of the Akampadam–Chimbachala Padasekhara Samithy, which won Plant Genome Saviour Community Award for 2012, urged the government to increase the procurement price of paddy.

The samithy comprises 110 farmers who cultivate paddy in 45 hectares. B. Pratheesh, secretary of the samithy, said the procurement price of Rs.17 was low.

“If the youth should take up farming and ensure our future food security, farm produce should fetch decent prices,” he said.

The samithy was selected for the award for protection of traditional varieties and conservation of germplasm.

The samithy had also partnered with KAU to produce the first ever varieties developed through participatory research, Kunjukunju Varna and Kunjukunju priya, as part of the innovative GALASA (Group Approach on Locally Adaptable and Sustainable Agriculture) programme introduced by KAU in 1999-2000. The germplasm conserved by Palakkad farmers have also been the gene source for many high yielding varieties.

N. Vasavan of Pachapoika in Kannur, who won the individual award, said agencies in the farm sector should promote substitutes for endosulfan.

Ciby George Kallingal of Patticaud, a recipient of the award, said farmers could earn a decent living through integrated farming. KAU officials described his 20-acre farm as a model farm. He grows plantation crops, exotic fruit trees, and keeps domestic animals, pets, ornamental birds and horses in his yard.

Sajeevan Kavungara, who won an award for promoting cultivation of leafy vegetables, said 62 varieties of leafy greens were ideal for growing in Kerala. "Kerala, which relies on neighbouring States for its vegetable needs,

Agriculture sector suffers loss of Rs.40 crore this monsoon

Detailed estimate will be available by early next week

Heavy rain in the State has caused financial loss to the tune of Rs.40 crore in the agriculture sector alone, it has been estimated.

"The detailed estimate of the loss due to monsoon fury will be available by early next week," said E.K. Bharat Bhooshan, the State Chief Secretary. Mr. Bhushan held a review meeting of the monsoon damage across the State at a meeting here on Sunday.

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy would approach the Centre with the details of the loss for claiming compensation.

The damage caused would be video-recorded as proof while presenting the case for compensation before Central authorities. The State Cabinet has sanctioned Rs.2,000 each for families staying in relief camps.

Free ration for a fortnight has also been sanctioned for people in flood-hit areas. The State has approached the Centre for more foodgrains to be supplied to the flood-affected, he said.

ROADWORKS

Road contractors would be asked to repair damaged roads in Kochi, which were built with a guarantee clause, said K. Babu, Minister for Excise.

There were complaints that a few roads had developed potholes shortly after laying them. "If the contractors fail to repair them, they would be blacklisted," said Mr. Babu after reviewing the flood situation in the district.

Flood-hit families of Kadavur, near Kothamangalam, would be rehabilitated in a week. The district administration has identified 50 cents each for 10 persons. A proposal empowering district collectors for felling trees that posed a danger to people would be placed before the State government.

The powers of the committee to decide on the felling of trees in public places would not be usurped.

However, the request would be for empowering the district collectors to permit the axing of trees that pose a risk. Compensatory afforestation will also be recommended in place of the axed trees, he said.

Hibi Eden and V.P. Sajeendran, MLAs, Kochi Mayor Tony Chammany and government officials attended the review meeting

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Farmers were urged to form the coconut producers' organisation with the support extended by NABARD. In a move to diversification, the Vice-Chancellor urged farmers to venture into production of value-added products from coconut through "secondary agriculture approach".

Coconut is cultivated in all the districts of Tamil Nadu with Cauvery Delta Zone contributing to about 62,000 hectares of land. Nagapattinam holds about 4,100 hectares of land under coconut cultivation predominantly in Veppankulam coastal area.

Chairing the seminar, Collector T. Munusamy spoke. The training programme on coconut production technologies employed the use of visual aids by the scientists of Coconut Research Station, Veppankulam. The sessions entailed demonstrations on coconut manure, plant protection, root feeding of TNAU coconut tonic and use of TNAU coconut climber under the aegis of the scientists of KVK, Sikkal, were organised by the KVK, Sikkal, Nagapattinam scientists

Study had warned against destruction of tribal farming

Agriculture programmes failed to ensure food security'

A study published by the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) in 2004 had warned the government against the "destruction of traditional tribal agriculture that ensured food security to the tribespeople in the Attappady Hills."

The study, titled 'Withering Valli: Alienation, degradation and enslavement of tribal women in Attappady', by Mariamma Kalathil, had noted that "the impact of agriculture development programmes on the tribal population was practically nil but resulted in destroying their traditional agriculture. More than the tribal population, settlers were the beneficiaries of the agriculture programmes."

"The present crisis in Attappady is related to land and agriculture. If the government had heeded the warning of the CDS study on the failure of agriculture programmes, the present situation of tribespeople losing their food security resulting in malnutrition and anaemia-related deaths could have been avoided," said Rajendra Prasad, president of 'Thampu', a voluntary organisation working for the welfare of tribespeople.

The report said: "The tribal society had been once self-reliant. They had a community-based, eco-friendly and self-governing political life till the time outside intervention of the settlers and the government began."

"Organic farming practised by the tribes folk sustained the land and nature. They were compelled to change their cultivating practices in the name of increasing production and development. In the process, they were alienated from their cultural ethos and values."

The study said 40 of the sample households had their own cattle or goats. "Cattle dung and ash were available for use as manure. The tribespeople cultivated their traditional food crops and a variety of leaf and other green vegetables. This intake had kept them healthy, strong and self-

reliant for ages. Their way of cultivation was eco-friendly. It did not need much water either,” the study said.

But when the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP) was started in 1975, one of the main sectors was agriculture development. In 1992-1997, an

amount of Rs.302.50 lakh was spent mainly in the form of grants and subsidies for purchase of hybrid seedlings, fertilizers, pesticides, pump sets, and implements.

“The programmes of the three Krishini Bhavans in the three grama panchayats forced the tribal people to make use of modern agriculture programmes replacing their traditional agriculture,” the report said.

Pumpset manufacturers have export opportunities'

The pumpset industry in Coimbatore has seen stable business during the last one year despite infrastructure challenges and power shortage, according to president of the Southern India Engineering Manufacturers' Association (SIEMA) T.C. Thiagarajan.

Speaking at the annual meeting of the association here on Friday, Mr. Thiagarajan said that SIEMA was networking with embassies of Germany, Thailand and the U.S. It was also creating a road map for the association (SIEMA 75).

He told *The Hindu* on Saturday that several countries were focusing on the agricultural sector. This was an opportunity for the association members to

tap the export potential. Manufacturers of agricultural and residential pumpsets also had export opportunities.

Further, there were several opportunities for the manufacturers in the green initiatives, such as solar and wind power.

The association was also trying to create a forum so that its members and their siblings in other countries could network. This would create an opportunity for skill and cultural exchange among them.

The office-bearers of the association for 2013-2014 are T.C. Thiagarajan, Managing Director of Chansuba Pumps (President), and V. Lakshminarayananasamy, Managing Director of Suguna Industries, K.K. Rajan, Chief Executive Officer of Sharp Industries, and V. Krishnakumar, General Manager (Marketing) of Aquasub Engineering (vice-presidents).

Plants do arithmetic calculation to avoid starvation



Plants do complex arithmetic calculations to make sure they have enough food to prevent starvation at night, a new study has found.

The research shows that in order to get them through the night, plants perform accurate arithmetic division. The calculation allows them to use up their starch reserves at a constant rate so that they run out almost precisely at dawn.

Sophisticated arithmetic

“This is the first concrete example in a fundamental biological process of such a sophisticated arithmetic calculation,” said mathematical modeller Professor Martin Howard from the John Innes Centre in Norwich, UK.

Plants feed themselves during the day by using energy from the Sun to convert carbon dioxide into sugars and starch. Once the Sun has set, they must depend on a store of starch to prevent starvation.

Scientists at the John Innes Centre show that plants make precise adjustments to their rate of starch consumption.

These adjustments ensure that the starch store lasts until dawn even if the night comes unexpectedly early or the size of the starch store.

Scientists show that to adjust their starch consumption so precisely they must be performing a mathematical calculation - Arithmetic division.

“The capacity to perform arithmetic calculation is vital for plant growth and productivity,” said metabolic biologist Professor Alison Smith.

“Understanding how plants continue to grow in the dark could help unlock new ways to boost crop yield,” said Smith.

During the night, mechanisms inside the leaf measure the size of the starch store and estimate the length of time until dawn. Information about time comes from an internal clock, similar to our own body clock.

The size of the starch store is then divided by the length of time until dawn to set the correct rate of starch consumption, so that, by dawn, around 95 per cent of starch is used up.

“The calculations are precise so that plants prevent starvation but also make the most efficient use of their food.

If the starch store is used too fast, plants will starve and stop growing during the night. If the store is used too slowly, some of it will be wasted,” said Smith.

The scientists used mathematical modelling to investigate how such a division calculation can be carried out inside a plant.

They proposed that information about the size of the starch store and the time until dawn is encoded in the concentrations of two kinds of molecules.

The study appears in the journal eLife.PTI

Farmers sceptical of farm pond work under job scheme

Quality of work done under MGNREGS suspect for want of monitoring'

While there was a unanimous plea to remove silt from the water bodies, scepticism was obvious at the agriculturists' grievances day here on Friday whether the workers enrolled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural

Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) would be able to accomplish the task.

A number of speakers, including R. Ulaganathan, District Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam; P. Pichai Pillai of All India Farmers' Association; and Ambedkar of Pazhur panchayat union lamented that silt removal was not done for many years in the district. It was imperative to deepen them and strengthen the bunds of the tanks, they pleaded. Besides, hyacinth that affected the smooth flow of water should be removed.

Mr. Ambedkar pointed out that Pullambadi canal alone had 24 tanks and one of these tanks had an ayacut of 6,800 acres. Once silt was removed from the water sources, they could store substantial quantum of water and irrigate thousands of acres, he added.

However, R. Sengamuthu, president of the District Farmers' Association, and N. Jayachandran, a veteran farmer of Aandimadam, wondered the MNREGS workers would be able to do such works. The former alleged that most of the works entrusted to these workers had not been done properly because of poor monitoring and these workers had not been paid the full daily wage of Rs. 148 in some places. Specifying a worker who died in harness, he pleaded that the families of such persons should be assisted by the Government. The latter said as the proposed silt removal work should be completed before the arrival of monsoon, it would be ideal to deploy earth movers which would be able to accomplish the task within six

hours. "The MNREGS workers would take several weeks for completing the same," he said.

K. Nagarathinam of T. Pazhur suggested that a board giving the details of the project, including the amount allocated and the number of workers engaged, should be put up at the project site ahead of the commencement of the project. This would help the villagers monitor it.

Mr. Sengamuthu, referring to the decision of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, to provide various assistance to delta farmers, especially the agri inputs at subsidised rates, suggested that it would be better if the State government announced an incentive for production of paddy per kg. Thus the farmers would be enthused to produce more. Other assistance such as inputs were not so effective in achieving the objective, he said.

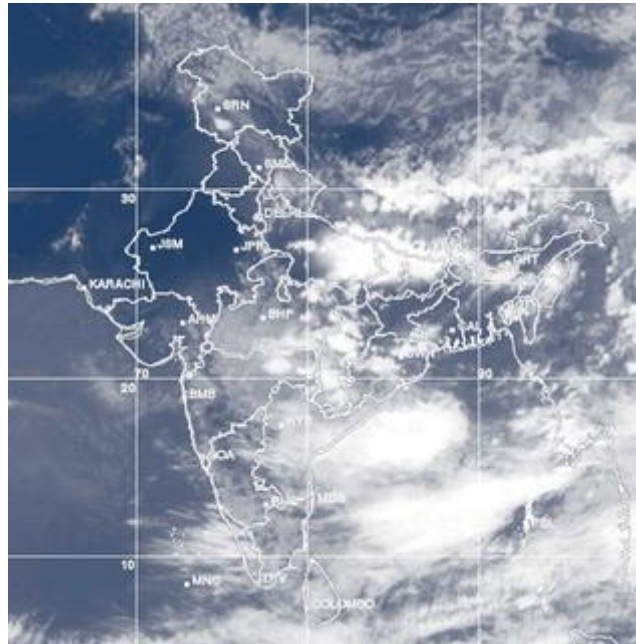
Mr. Ulaganathan, who pointed out that four persons in the district had died of kidney failure, wanted Collector M. Ravikumar, who was in the chair, to inspect the packaged drinking water units and the restaurants, because these persons could have died of water contamination. Besides, the overhead tanks (OHT) in the panchayats should be properly cleaned. "How is that white washing these tanks cost as much as Rs. 90,000 each?" he wondered.

He pleaded for constituting a committee to supervise this work.

Mr. Pichai Pillai charged the government hospitals of failing to provide pure water.

Mr. Jeyachandran alleged that even those cashew farmers who had insured their crops had not received the compensation. “Neither do we (cashew growers) get bank loan for sinking borewells,” he said.

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on June 23rd

Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	42	320	154
New Delhi (Sfd)	41	310	113
Chandigarh	38	300	185
Hissar	42	320	101
Bhuntar	34	210	115
Shimla	25	190	166
Jammu	41	310	28

Srinagar	33	180	32
Amritsar	43	300	131
Patiala	40	290	117
Jaipur	40	300	86
Udaipur	35	270	84
Allahabad	39	280	75
Lucknow	37	260	164
Varanasi	38	290	53
Dehradun	33	250	635
Agartala	36	2557	165
Ahmedabad	37	270	103
Bangalore	29	205	135
Bhubaneshwar	31	240	255
Bhopal	32	229	160
Chennai	39	290	123
Guwahati	38	264	74
Hyderabad	34	250	156
Kolkata	36	280	263
Mumbai	32	273	824
Nagpur	38	270	171
Patna	36	280	42
Pune	29	230	262
Thiruvananthapuram	30	2320	317
Imphal	31	232	79
Shillong	26	19 tr	235

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

The axis of Monsoon trough on MSL passes through Ferozepur, Karnal, Unnao and Varanasi and thence southeast wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh, east Rajasthan, east Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly dry over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: EAST RAJASTHAN: Atru, Chabra, Chipabarod and Manohar Thana 1 each, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Katerniagaht 1 and UTTARAKHAND: Munsiyari 1.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 25th June

2013: Rain/thundershowers may occur at isolated places over Uttarakhand during next 48 hours and at a few places thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at isolated places over Himachal Pradesh and east Rajasthan. Rain/thundershowers may occur at isolated places over north Uttar Pradesh from tomorrow onwards. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE

MORNING OF 25th June 2013: Mainly clear sky becoming partly cloudy sky



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bees, acrid smoke from chillies keep elephants away & reduce conflict

Low-cost methods like torches, chillies and bee cultivation, suggested by Pune-based researchers, have helped farmers in northern Karnataka protect their crops from marauding elephants.

"The project, implemented over the past three years in Dandeli-Anshi Tiger Reserve in northern Karnataka, has begun to bear results. Farmers from 35 villages who participated in the project said the elephants have not raided their fields ever since they started implementing these measures," said Prachi Mehta, executive director, research, of the Wildlife Research and Conservation Society (WRCS).

The project, funded by the Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, is aimed at conflict-mitigation. The objective is to make farmers more tolerant towards elephants, enabling the conservation of the animals, said Jayant Kulkarni, executive director of conservation of WRCS.

Once farmers are able to protect their crops, they are not hostile to elephants nor do they indulge in retaliatory attacks. Mehta explained that the farmers do not need protection from raiding herds throughout the year. It is only when the crops are ripening or have been freshly harvested that the elephants pose a threat.

"We taught the farmers to adopt simple methods that have been effective

elsewhere. Bee cultivation to prevent elephant attacks is used in Africa where it is a success. The buzzing of the bees is an irritant to the elephants. So we tried to implement it in our project," Mehta said.

She said bee boxes provided by the government were expensive at Rs 2,500 per box, so they came up with a cheaper alternative. "We taught the farmers to put up simple earthen pots coated with bees wax on the edges of their fields. After some time, some were colonised by bees," she said. The idea has gained popularity because of the added advantage that the farmers can extract honey for themselves, she added.

"Another simple measure was to burn a mix of pungent chillies, tobacco and dung or grass on the edge of the fields," Mehta said. Burning chillies and tobacco are major irritants for elephants. Their trunks are very sensitive to these smells and if they sense these odours, they will certainly avoid the area, she said.

Farmers were taught to weave the chilli-tobacco mix into long bundles of hay or make dung-cakes with the chillies and tobacco. These were allowed to burn through the night as elephants are nocturnal, she said. Similarly, stacks of harvested crops were protected by fencing them with ropes coated with the chilli-tobacco paste, she added.

Farmers who stayed awake at night to guard their fields were told to make minor changes. "Instead of setting up their shacks at ground level, we suggested they set up perches on trees. This prevents incidents of

elephants trampling those inside shacks," she said, adding that villagers have also been armed with powerful torches. Merely shining the torches on the elephants can chase them away, she said.

Sowing in full swing in Saurashtra

The joy is palpable on the face of farmers across Saurashtra, which was hit by the worst drought in the last decade, as early rain has accelerated sowing operations in the region.

Saurashtra has already received 37 per cent of its average annual rainfall so far. According to state's director of agriculture department data, sowing has been completed in 8,10,200 hectares across the region.

"Due to early and abundant rainfall, the watershed schemes in and around the villages have been recharged along with ground water. This is enough to cultivate kharif crops," said Rajendrasinh Jadea, a farmer from Meshpar village in Rajkot district.

Farmers are opting for groundnut and cotton as major crops in the region. As per the data, total area covered under the groundnut crops was registered at 3,94,400 hectares in Saurashtra while area covered under cotton was 3,59,000 hectares. The other crops include bajra, vegetable, fodders among others.

According to water resources department, 135 major dams of Saurashtra region are filled with 17.21 per cent water. Out of the three dams in the

region, one is put on high alert, one is on alert and one is put on warning as the water level in these dams are increasing.

15 peacocks found dead in Nashik

As many as 15 peacocks were found dead at a village here, forest sources said today.

A local leader had yesterday received information about some peacocks lying dead near Dev river at Kharvandi village and he subsequently informed forest officials about it.

The officials visited the spot and found 15 carcasses of the national bird.

One peacock was alive and was taken for treatment at Yeola.

Officials said the birds died apparently after consuming some poisonous substance, which may have been mixed with grains, as peacocks often enter the fields of farmers and damage crops.

However, the exact cause of death would be ascertained after postmortem, the officials added

Farmer's body fears distress sale of paddy

Zilla Krushak Kalyan Manch(ZKKM), a farmers' outfit, fears distress sale of paddy in Koraput district of Odisha as the administration has closed procurement centres for two days after opening on June 10.

The association alleged that with mandis being closed, the farmers will be forced to sell their produce to private parties at a lower rate than Rs 1,250 for a quintal of fair average quality (FAQ) paddy as fixed by the government.

"While farmers have already suffered huge loss of harvested crops in last week's torrential rain, closure of mandis has increased their woes as they are unable to sell their remaining produce, which is in good condition," said ZKKM secretary Narendra Kumar Pradhan.

According to Pradhan, cashing on the situation traders from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, with help of their local agents have started visiting villages and are trying to procure paddy from farmers at a lower price than the government fixed price.

Former Koraput MLA Tara Prasad Bahinipati has alleged that over 200 trucks of paddy from Jeypore, Borigumma and Kundra blocks have already been transported to Andhra in connivance with the local middlemen in past one week.

"As the crop loss assessment is in full swing in the district, the mandis have been temporarily closed. If mandis remain open it may hamper crop loss assessment," said Koraput district collector Sachin R Jadhav

hindustantimes

Weather - Chennai

Today's Weather



Sunny

Monday, Jun 24

Max Min

37° | 29°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:44

Humidity: 58

Sunset: 06:38

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1002

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Tuesday, Jun 25

Max Min

38° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday

Jun 26



38° | 29°

Cloudy

Thursday

Jun 27



39° | 28°

Overcast

Friday

Jun 28



39° | 28°

Overcast

Saturday

Jun 29



39° | 29°

Overcast

Sunday

Jun 30



39° | 29°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:44

Humidity: 58

Sunset: 06:38

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1002

Drought relief subsidy for small tea growers

The Centre has announced a subsidy scheme for tea small growers to mitigate drought's adversity.

“This arises from our representations to the Tea Board and the raising of the issue in the Lok Sabha by P. Viswanathan, Board Member, representing Parliament. Now, Finance Minister P. Chidambaram has written to Viswanathan confirming the subsidy scheme”, Tea Board Member S. Ramu told *Business Line*.

In his letter, Finance Minister has said that Rs 200 crore has been allotted for implementing various schemes for small growers' development during the 12th Plan. This includes a scheme for drought relief.

“The scheme provides for subsidy for creating irrigation facilities. The subsidy is 40 per cent of irrigation investment including tube-wells, check-dams, sprinklers and drip irrigation. It is available for individual tea growers”, Finance Minister has said.

bl24_agri_gnana

GOLD FUTURES MAY TEST SUPPORT

Comex gold futures ended higher recovering from its lows on Friday, after earlier hitting near-three-year lows, but stayed on track for its biggest

weekly drop in almost two years after the US Federal Reserve signalled an end to easy money.

Fed chief Ben Bernanke's remarks on a possible scale back of the stimulus programme later this year, which spurred a surge in benchmark US bond yields that drove gold deeper into bear market territory.

Silver plunged nearly eight per cent.

The US stocks fell 2.5 per cent and oil tumbled four per cent.

Bullion, a non-yield bearing asset and a traditional inflation hedge, tends to be particularly sensitive to interest rate changes compared with other riskier assets such as equities.

Going forward economic data from the US could determine direction for precious metal as it has lost the inflationary hedge status for now.

Comex gold futures moved lower as expected. As mentioned the previous update, it appears more probable that resistance near \$1,410-1,415 could cap upticks for next decline towards \$1,335-1,325 region the coming week.

The fall extended even further towards \$1,268. The structure in the daily chart shows projected objectives falling between \$1,245 and \$1,225.

Recoveries are expected to stall below \$1,320-1,340 area. It has to cross above \$1,345 to diminish the scope of the expected fall to some extent.

Next resistance would be around \$1,360. We favour the above mentioned objectives to be tested in the coming sessions and a possible upward reversal subsequently arresting this downward trend.

The wave counts need to be reviewed once again.

As mentioned earlier, a possible corrective wave "C" has ended at \$1,523 and a possible new impulse has begun with a potential to test \$2,025-30 levels in the form of a fifth wave move. However, a move below \$1,690 has increased the possibility that the broad corrective consolidation is in progress now and the impulse has been converted to a corrective move in the form of a wave "C".

Wave "A" began from \$1,920, and ended at \$1,527. Wave "B" began from \$1,527 and ended at \$1,798. Wave "C" has begun from there. Projected target for the wave "C" is at now at \$1,225-1,245.

RSI is in the oversold zone now indicating that it is oversold and a possible upward correction is in the offing. The averages in MACD are still below the zero line of the indicator hinting at bearishness to be intact.

Therefore, look for gold futures to test the supports and then bounce again.

Supports are at \$1,265, \$1,245 and \$1,225 and resistances are at \$1,320, \$1,345 and \$1,365.

Gnanasekaar T.

(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.)

Tomato prices rise on low availability

Low availability of good quality stocks pushed tomato prices up by Rs 300-500 a quintal on Sunday.

Vikas Sachdeva, a trade expert, told *Business Line*, that inconsistent rainfall has damaged the tomato crop.

Arrivals of the new crop from the Himachal belt is likely to start very soon but the quality of the stock will be a matter of concern.

Currently, even the quality of superior quality produce is not satisfactory, he added.

Around 1,300 crates (a crate is 25 kg) of different varieties of tomatoes arrived at the Karnal vegetable market and were quoted at Rs 1,000-2,000.

Around 1,900 crates of varieties such as Anoop, Himsona and Trishul arrived at the Karnal markets.

About 50 per cent stocks were of low quality; around 30 per cent medium quality while 20 per cent was of superior quality.

Prices of superior quality increased by Rs 400 and quoted at Rs 1,900-2,000. Medium quality produce went up by Rs 500 and quoted at 1,500 while low quality was Rs 300 up from previous levels at Rs 1,000-1,200.

According to the trade experts, rainfall in the last few days has affected the yield and quality of the new crop.

Yield from the new crop is lower and the tomato size is smaller. Quality is likely to remain lower in the coming days. About 100 crates remained unsold due to low quality, on Sunday.

Market may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuations in the coming days, said trade experts.

Gold, silver fall on Bernanke's remarks

Camp: Dubai:

Just one hawkish sentence by Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke on Wednesday conveying the sense that if all goes well with the economy, asset purchases (quantitative easing or QE) will be reduced in the second half of 2013 and come to an end by mid-2014 set the tone for the global commodity markets last week, some of them such as precious metals rather sensitive to QE expectations.

Gold and silver fell sharply to September 2011 lows.

The question that arises once again is whether the liquidity-driven global commodity boom has come to an end or at least nearing its end. While the Fed's approach had the biggest impact, one cannot ignore the supporting

factors such as weakness in Chinese economic data and liquidity squeeze. Continuing the trend from April, China's commodity imports in May remained subdued with key commodities down year on year. So, while gold and silver prices declined as a direct result of imminent QE tapering, the broad risk-off move in base metals has been driven largely by macroeconomic developments impacting the demand side and rising inventory levels.

No wonder then that all metals were down week on week.

While silver led the way with a sharp fall of 8.4 per cent over the week (Friday AM Fix \$19.87/oz in London), gold was not far behind with a loss of 6.9 per cent (Friday PM Fix \$1,295/oz). Palladium was badly hit with a price fall of 7.7 per cent and platinum 5.7 per cent. Oil WTI was down 4.6 per cent. Among base metals, the worst performers were lead (-4.2 per cent), copper (-3.8 per cent) and aluminium (-3.5 per cent).

Some experts, however, suggest that commodity markets have been relatively shielded from the impact of the recent sell-off in financial markets.

The commodity markets can expect a more independent, diverse and differentiated price performance. Not liquidity and resultant speculative froth but demand and supply fundamentals of individual commodities will once again assert themselves.

As succinctly observed by an expert, 'the period of commodities trading, as a derivative of risk-on/risk-off sentiment, appears to be coming to an end'.

Gold

Silver led the massive sell-off in precious metals last week after the hawkish Fed press briefing pressured prices lower. This was not surprising given the metal's weak fundamentals. The market is in a huge surplus.

In London, gold tumbled to breach the \$1,300 an ounce barrier to a PM Fix of \$ 1,293/oz on Thursday, slightly edging up the next day. Silver found itself under greater pressure to go down from Thursday AM Fix of \$20.24/oz to a low of \$19.87/oz on Friday. Platinum tumbled to \$1,365/oz on Friday (lowest level since November 2009) from the previous day's \$1,391/oz and palladium \$672/oz.

Gold ETP outflows have reached 490 tonnes so far this year; and with prices plummeting below \$1,300/oz, more outflows can be expected as it opens up a new bracket of potentially cash-negative positions.

Net fund length has been on a downtrend for last several months and gross short positions are at a record high. Clearly, the investor sentiment towards gold has turned negative and is no more perceived as a safe haven asset assuring solid returns.

The Indian government continues to pose a threat to gold import and gold demand. Physical market sales have slowed with the conclusion of marriage season and onset of southwest monsoon spurring farm activities in rural areas. With the rupee substantially enervated and testing 60 to a US dollar, the benefit of overseas price fall has not flowed fully to Indian buyers.

Gold is likely to consolidate at around \$1,300/oz levels in the next few days until some new price trigger appears in the market. Investors are unlikely to return to this precious metal in a hurry. According to technical analysts, gold's daily trend is bearish. Resistance is seen at \$1,320 and then at \$1,300 while support is seen at \$1,265 and then \$1,240. While buyers have emerged at around \$1,265, in the absence of basing signals, there is risk of extension toward \$1,150.

Base metals

The market came under significant pressure over the past week. The complex bore the brunt of a twin attack in the form of Fed statement and weaker Chinese trade data. The liquidity squeeze in China if sustains can exacerbate the seasonal slowdown in metals demand.

In London, on Friday, LME cash copper was \$6,785/t and aluminium \$1,748/t. The International Nickel Study Group has estimated a 33,000 tonne surplus for the year to date. In lead a 31,000 tonne deficit year to date is seen while the zinc market is seen with a surplus of 49,000 tonnes so far, according to International Lead and Zinc Study Group.

Technical analysts see copper daily trend bearish. While resistance is seen at \$7,190 and then \$6,930, support is seen at \$6,690 and \$6,635.

Crude

Despite fall last week, there is little pressure for prices to go down further or remain subdued as there is no fundamental imbalance. The second half may witness demand pick up and some supply shortfall.

After two droughts, smile is back on AP farmers' faces

Into the third week of monsoon, the State received 23 per cent more rain this year as against deficits in the last two years.

All but four districts registered either average or excel rainfall.

Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, Nellore and Kurnool showed a deficit of up to 59 per cent in rainfall.

Storage levels in major dams barring Nagarjunasagar, however, remain a worry.

The Agriculture Department expects higher acreage in oilseed crops as rains arrived on time.

Initial reports suggest good gains by cotton, maize, red gram and soya.

Acreage

“We expect a slight drop in cotton acreage this year when compared to last year’s 22 lakh hectares. It might settle at the season average of 18 lakh ha,” an official of Agriculture Ministry told *Business Line*.

Cotton sowings covered an extent of four lakh ha as on June 19, as against three lakh ha same day last year. The season average for that day is two lakh ha.

“We are projecting a demand for 1.31 crore packets of cottonseed this year. We have positioned enough stocks to meet the demand,” Agriculture Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana said. But farmers’ associations expect

shortage of seeds of a few varieties that are in great demand. “The government has long stopped development and procurement of seeds.

“It has completely left the business to private companies,” Rama Rao, a leader of Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham, told *Business Line*.

Groundnut, which suffered heavily last year, showed signs of come back this kharif by meeting the as-on-date target of one lakh hectares, meeting the season average.

The State grows groundnut in 12 lakh ha.

Soya made good gains by witnessing sowings in 34,000 ha as against a naught last year.

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Pepper rules firm on strong demand, tight supply

Last week, pepper futures witnessed a tight supply situation at a time when the domestic demand showed an upsurge.

Those who were covering only hand to mouth so far and those not maintaining inventories were seen started buying now.

At the same time, the continuous weakening of the rupee against the dollar has made imports costly and unworkable and that in turn has compelled value addition industry to turn towards indigenous sources for low bulk density pepper.

This phenomenon coupled with the upsurge in upcountry buying has prompted Karnataka sellers to push up their prices.

Meanwhile, primary market dealers said that back-to-back coverage was very difficult as the farmers were not releasing their material and those interested were not ready to sell below Rs 400 a kg.

Stockists in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand were all active in Karnataka and covered substantial quantities at Rs 350-375, they said.

Incessant rains in Kerala's growing areas has led to a sharp fall in arrivals.

Tight availability amid strong demand pushed the spot prices.

At the same time, according to the trade, the four per cent daily price band continues to be in force in futures trading at a national commodity exchange which has started futures trading in pepper recently.

Last week, all the active contracts showed sharp rise on the NMCE.

July, Aug and Sept shot up by Rs 2,509, Rs 2,046 and Rs 1,664 respectively a quintal to close at Rs 38,750, Rs 38,980 and Rs 38,780. Total open interest increased by 71 tonnes to 98 tonnes. Total turnover went up by 12 tonnes to 410 tonnes. Spot prices soared by Rs 1,500 to close at Rs 35,700 (ungarbled) and Rs 37,200 (MG 1) on tight supply amid strong demand.

The Indian parity on the international market according to IPSTA rates for July stood at \$6,600 a tonne (c&f) while at the national exchange rate, it was at \$6,800 a tonne (c&f).

Farmers are said to be holding back their produce and, hence, the arrivals continued to remain thin. There are more buyers than sellers.

Mixed trend at Kochi tea sale

A mixed trend persisted for almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction last week. In sale no: 25, the quantity on offer in the dust CTC grades was 13,56,000 kg. The market for good liquoring varieties particularly finer grades were steady to sometimes dearer.

Clean black well made medium varieties witnessed a steady market. Others were irregular and easier by Rs 2-4. The quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 18,000 kg and the market for primary grades barely remained steady. Others were lower with some withdrawals. However, there was a good participation from exporters and upcountry buyers. In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties were quoted at Rs 103-116; RD grades fetched Rs 102-123, SRD ruled at Rs 109-138 and SFD stood at Rs 110-147.

The demand was good for orthodox leaf grades and the offer was 2,17,000 kg.

Nilgiri bolder brokens and smaller brokens were firm to dearer by Rs 3-5. Corresponding fannings remained steady around last. Medium tippy grades

were firm to dearer. Other medium brokens also witnessed a similar trend. Medium fannings remained steady, while medium whole leaf grades were firm.

The quantity on offer in the CTC grades was 67,500 kg. The market for good liquoring CTC brokens and fannings remained steady. In the dust category, Monica SFD quoted the best prices of Rs 148 followed by Jayshree Prm. SRD at Rs 147. In the leaf grades, Kodanaad TGFOP fetched the best prices of Rs 251 followed by Kundalay GFBOP at Rs 234.

'Taste-and-select' meets help propagate jackfruit

During April 2011, a few farmers from a Dakshina Kannada village met to taste and select best varieties of jackfruits in their surroundings.

The farmers brought 35 varieties of jackfruits from a radius of 15 km of Muliya village in Bantwal taluk. Of these, five varieties were selected as the best ones in the 'taste-and-select' meet at farmer Venkatakrisna Sharma's house in Muliya village.

These farmers called themselves as '*Halasu Snehi Koota*' (a group of jackfruit friends). Those varieties selected in that meet were sent for grafting.

Shree Padre, who has been working on creating awareness about jackfruit cultivation, told *Business Line* that probably for the first time such a thing to select best varieties in jackfruit was done at farmers' level.

Venkatakrishna Sharma, the farmer who is the main force behind the group, said that such meetings at Muliya and two other places led to select around 15 best varieties. Already farmers have planted around 5,000 grafted saplings from these varieties, he said.

Each variety has its own characteristics. While some may be suited for eating, others may be good raw materials for the preparation of chips, pappads, etc., he said. In fact, the members are also supplying jackfruits to an ice cream manufacturer in Mumbai.

Varanashi Krishnamoorthy, Managing Trustee of Varanashi Research Foundation at Adyanadka village in the district, said that Raghunandan Kamath of the Mumbai-based Natural Ice Creams had attended one such taste-and-select meets. He sought the farmers' help to supply around 25 tonnes of jackfruit that year. (The foundation works in the areas of improvement to agriculture and allied fields.)

Fresh rains for Himalayan hills as 'low' forms in Bay of Bengal

A fresh weather-setting low-pressure area over north-west Bay of Bengal is pumping in monsoon easterlies from the Bay of Bengal into the plains and hills of North-West India.

Mercifully, there is no western disturbance coming in from the opposite direction, one of which had interacted with them and set up fatal torrents over Uttarkhand for three days last week.

Hills bound

The low-pressure area will seek to push into East-central and adjoining Central India but will likely get steered off course by seasonal westerlies (not associated with a western disturbance). It will head towards the hills of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, and could set up rains along the Himalayan foothills bordering the State and even into Nepal for the next couple of days.

A western disturbance is a low-pressure wave emerging from Caspian Sea/Mediterranean and travels across Iran, Iraq, West Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan before entering North-West India. It often carries a trough of low-pressure, carrying moisture picked along the way, and bangs it against the heights of Himalayas. The moisture gets lifted and cools to form clouds.

This triggers precipitation/fog depending on the season (summer/winter). When it interacts with moist monsoon easterlies from the Bay of Bengal, the rains can scale up several times over.

In the instant case, it is likely that the intensity of the monsoon flows triggered the formation of a 'vortex,' which is what believed to have sparked the Mumbai deluge way back in 2005.

Meanwhile on Sunday, the India Met Department warned that heavy rainfall (of 7-12 cm) could lash one or two places over flood-ravaged Uttarakhand over the next three days.

WEATHER ALERT

Heavy to very heavy rainfall is also likely over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Odisha, Coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep during next two days.

Heavy rainfall would break out over Chhattisgarh, Vidarbha and north Andhra Pradesh during this period.

The seasonal trough was partly active across plains of North-West India and extending into East-central Bay of Bengal, signalling the activity heralded by the low-pressure area.

The offshore trough along the West Coast ran down from Maharashtra coast to Kerala coast, depicting active monsoon conditions in the region.

Business Standard

Chinese delegation to visit marine facilities in AP

With focus on reviving seafood imports from India, a 10-member Chinese delegation is arriving at Visakhapatnam on Tuesday (June 25) to visit the state's shrimp processing plants, prawn farms and other related facilities, said the Prawn Farmers Federation of India.

"In recent years, China has been importing huge quantities of marine products from Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand, whereas not much from India. With Andhra Pradesh producing large quantities of vanamei shrimp, which has a huge demand in the Chinese market, the latter is showing good interest in procuring marine foods from here. In this regard, the federation has been initiating steps to attract Chinese traders," said I P R Mohan Raju, president, Prawn Farmers Federation of India.

In the current year, AP vanamei shrimp production is expected to reach 200,000 tonne. Apart from this, 40,000-50,000 tonne shrimp will come through sea catches. The greater access to Chinese market could help the industry grow in the international market. Of late, China had been imposing about 20 per cent import duty on Indian marine products, whereas, shrimp imports from Vietnam have zero duty, he said.

Therefore, to benefit from the policy, a majority of Indian exports to China was being routed via Vietnam, said Mohan Raju.

The annual demand for marine products in China stands at 1.6 million tonne. However, local production was 1.2 million tonne, a net deficit of 400,000 tonne, he said.

Towards 2050: structural shifts

India must leave behind agriculture, family companies and public sector monoliths for competitive, professionally run enterprises

The structure of the Indian economy will change radically by 2050. A projection of the magnitude of this change requires some assumption about growth rates. But the broad picture about the structural shift is more or less invariant for an overall growth rate in the range of six to eight per cent, with agricultural GDP growing at three or four per cent, industrial GDP at eight or nine per cent and service sector GDP at six or eight per cent. The share of agriculture in GDP declines from 18 per cent to four or five per cent and that of industry goes up from 27.5 per cent to 40 to 45 per cent between 2010 and 2050. The share of service sector GDP stays more or less the same.

Growth rates obviously matter for the increase in GDP per worker, which would be about five times with six per cent growth and over eight times with eight per cent growth. The rate of change in agricultural GDP per worker would be more or less the same as the GDP per worker in industry and services because of a massive shift in the occupational structure of the workforce.

The rural population and the number of workers in agriculture will continue

to rise till the middle of the next decade, after which they will decline in absolute terms. About 100 million workers will shift out of agriculture and will have to be absorbed in manufacturing and services. At the same time, the labour force will be larger by about 250 million workers; so the non-agricultural sectors, which today employ around 200 million workers, will have to find productive work for some 350 million more.

These numbers look overly definite. The point is that unless this sort of structural shift takes place, the so-called demographic dividend will remain a dream. In fact, it is difficult to envisage any scenario of social, political and economic stability that does not assume a shift of magnitude comparable to the projections presented above. Therefore, the first lesson on preparing for 2050 is that the planning of infrastructure, urbanisation and skill development must be aimed at increasing substantially the pace of job-oriented industrial growth.

The numbers are useful, but the more interesting aspect is the structural reorientation within each sector that will have to be promoted. The industrial sector will expand by a factor of 20-30. This will require major structural changes in the institutional framework for infrastructure and corporate governance. The greatest challenge is perhaps the restructuring and reorientation of the public sector so that it is driven more by delivering shareholder value than by diktats from corrupt ministers and babus.

We need to deconstruct infrastructure so that we can carve out well-defined spaces where multiple suppliers can compete, and spaces that for technical reasons have to remain a public monopoly or under tight regulatory oversight. This process has begun in telecom and power but needs to go much further - for instance, by offering consumers a choice of suppliers for electricity and allowing local mini-grids. The part that has to remain a monopoly, like a transmission line for power or an expressway between cities, can be privatised if there is an effective process for ensuring competition for markets. The big step here is to get the big public sector entities to start operating as competitive players and hive off the necessary monopoly parts to separate publicly controlled or tightly regulated entities.

The structural changes in the private corporate sector relate essentially to a process of gradual transformation of family-owned and -managed corporations to professionally managed corporations where the separation of ownership and management is clear and management accountability is to the whole shareholding body. Independent financial intermediaries that will handle the savings of a burgeoning middle class can be the instrument for ensuring this.

This involves a string of connected changes: having boards that are truly independent from management, a transparent market for corporate control so that incumbent managements face real threats of takeovers, and better accounting and disclosure standards. A market for corporate control that is less concerned about protecting incumbent management will also go a long

way towards the consolidation required in organised retail and wholesale trade, capital goods, consumer durables and financial services. A bold move would be to make public sector entities potential targets for takeovers.

We are still a long way from this. More than half the share capital of Indian companies is in the hands of promoter groups that provide family-based management leadership. Around a quarter is held by domestic financial institutions and foreign institutional investors. The pressure for governance changes will probably come from these foreign investors who would like nothing better than globally acceptable standards of corporate governance, transparency about performance and accounting standards. However, domestic financial institutions and minority shareholders who hold about a fifth of the capital can play a role in holding incumbent managements to account. The Securities and Exchange Board of India and the company law authorities will have to work hard to bring about this very necessary transition.

The non-corporate enterprise sector in India is huge - some 36 million units employ 80 million people. It is a crucial part of the industrial sector for two reasons: the jobs that it provides; and its role as start-ups that experiment with new products, processes or business methods. The big structural gap here is the capital market barriers that stop it from growing. The orthodox initial public offering market will not help here, and we need better institutions for early-stage financing to incubate new ventures and enterprising funds that focus on taking promising ones to scale.

Structural changes will be required even in the agricultural sector. By 2050 the number of people dependent on agriculture will be less than one per hectare of gross cropped area as against the present worker area ratio of 1.5. This large reduction in the numbers dependent on agriculture will mean an increase in average farm size and possibly an increase in mechanisation. However, the more important change is the shift from foodgrain-oriented farms to more complex enterprises that grow a variety of higher-value items such as fruit, vegetables and animal husbandry products. They will be linked more closely to structured co-operatives and organised retail rather than to local *mandis* for marketing.

By 2050 India will have to make a transition from peasant agriculture, family-run corporations and public sector monoliths to a competitive system of professionally run enterprises.

Madhya Pradesh registers 13% agriculture growth for 2012-13

The state has outsmarted Haryana and now stands third after Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in per hectare yield

After registering nearly 20 per cent growth during year 2011-12, Madhya Pradesh has once again claimed to have achieved a higher agriculture growth among all Indian states. Though the growth figures slipped from 18.91 per cent to 13.33 per cent the total foodgrain production rose to 23.1 million metric tonne in 2012-13 against 20.3 million metric tonne in 2011-12.

“The state has outsmarted even Haryana and now stands third after Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in per hectare yield,” a government spokesperson said.

“Madhya Pradesh has contributed nearly 9.5 per cent to the total 255.36 million metric tonne food grain production of the country,” he added

The growth has come after intensive agriculture extension programmes, motivational programmes, training to farmers on using modern farm techniques, as a result arable land area has increased considerably over the years; from 19.66 million hectare in 2008-09 to 22.3 million hectare now.

State cultivated the handsome growth figures from two main high return crops; gram and pulses that catapulted the state on top slot with gram production reached 3.19 million metric tonne and other pulses at 4.69 million metric tonne respectively.

Two main factors fed the growth engine of the farm sector; zero percent loan to farmers and creation of additional irrigation facilities.

“Our farm lending at zero percent touched Rs 10,800 crore last year and it will reach Rs 12,000 crore this year,” the spokesperson said adding, “for the last six years endless efforts have created additional irrigation facility on an acreage of 726,000 hectare, another record among Indian states. Besides, timely availability of fertilizers and seeds helped farmers pare their input cost by Rs 300 crore.”

Two farmers had last year begged president's Krishi Karman award for reporting highest farm output in wheat and gram that touched 74 quintal from a hectare of land.

State initiated efforts to make farming a profitable business few years ago by creating separate cabinet meeting for agriculture to chalk out strategy for its two main kharif and rabi crops namely Soya and wheat respectively.

According to third forecast of the revenue department released recently, state is likely to post 16 million tonne of wheat and 8.4 million tonne of soya this year.

Soybean arrivals more than double in one week

Soybean arrivals in have shown substantial increase in Madhya Pradesh as it has more than doubled this week compared to previous week, said traders. "We witnessed arrival of around 115,000 bags of 100 kg each in Madhya Pradesh on Saturday which was just 40,000 bags a week ago," said P Goyal a soybean trader in Indore mandi. At Indore mandi, farmers delivered around 7,500 bags of 100 kg each against 3,000 bags a week ago, said mandi officials. Traders feel farmers generally offload their inventories before sowing ends and also they want to get the price benefit. Farmers feel soybean prices may be below current levels in the coming days as the state has witnessed early sowing this year and crop prospects are good.

At present, soybean is being auctioned in Indore mandi at Rs 3,750-3,825 per 100 kg and plant delivery prices were Rs 3,850-3,950 per 100 kg. Soybean prices showed good gains in the previous days due to strong US dollar against the Indian rupee, claim traders. According to them, strong dollar means better realisation from soymeal exports and expensive soyoil imports. India is one of the leading soymeal exporters to the southeast Asian countries and also among leading importers of vegetable oils in the world. Domestic factors like increased supplies may put further pressure on prices, said traders.