

CM announces launching of 'Amma seeds'

The Tamil Nadu government will soon launch 'Amma seeds' and an 'Amma Farm Women Skill Development Centre' at a cost of Rs. 113.26 crore, and will set up 770 farm women groups. Announcing several schemes in the Assembly on Thursday, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa said the State was poised to achieve a new high in agricultural production of 110.65 lakh metric tonnes. Under the new initiative to encourage farmers to use certified seeds, the government would integrate the State seed farms, seed production centres and farmers. A seed development agency would be set up to market the 'Amma seeds' through 'Amma service centre' outlets. Ms. Jayalalithaa said that to encourage farm-related research and benefit rural farmers and youth, three agricultural colleges and research centres would be opened at Kudimiyamalai in Pudukottai, Eachankottai in Thanjavur and Vazhavachanur in Tiruvannamalai district. To step up agricultural production, an integrated agricultural extension scheme for farmers would be implemented at a cost of Rs. 16.9 crore. The benefits of the Farmers Crop Management System would be extended to horticulturists. It would offer information technology-linked post-production management strategies. The State would set up integrated agricultural extension centres in 50 blocks at a cost of Rs. 75 crore, the Chief Minister said. The centres would provide assistance, including agricultural inputs and farm equipment. Ms. Jayalalithaa said the government would also set up service centres in 385 places to hire equipment for farmers and for servicing and repairing equipment. To help farmers preserve perishable commodities and ensure availability of quality agricultural produce, the government, with the help of various departments, the private sector and farmers' groups, would set up a process industry for agricultural produce at a cost of Rs. 25 crore. This would benefit farmers in Ariyalur, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Perambalur, Ramanathapuram, Sivaganga, Tuticorin, Tiruvannamalai, Virudhunagar and Salem districts. Cultivation of red gram pulses would be turned into a movement to achieve self-sufficiency, and farmers' clusters will be consolidated, the Chief Minister said. The State would directly procure the red gram pulses from the farmers at a reasonable price, and the scheme would be implemented at a cost of Rs. 55.15 crore.

Centres of excellence

To meet the challenges in agriculture, Ms. Jayalalithaa said the government would set up six centres of excellence in various areas. These included a centre of excellence in molecular breeding in Coimbatore, dry/rain-fed crops centre of excellence at Chettinad in Sivaganga, soil health centre in Tiruchi, a centre of excellence in innovation in Madurai, a farm women skill development centre of excellence in Tiruchi and a centre of excellence in oil farm at Pattukottai, all at a cost of Rs 28 crore. To help enhance agricultural skills, a centre for agricultural skill development would be set up at a cost of Rs. 20 crore to conduct a one-year certificate course in agriculture to 10,000 rural youths over 10 years. The Chief Minister said that to ensure remunerative prices for agricultural produce and stock up on the products in the absence of viable prices, regulated market committees would be set up in the

Naidumangalam and Kalasapakkam blocks of Thiruvannamalai district and the Thirunavalur block of Villuppuram district. The State would help to install 100 solar-powered driers in the current year for processing agricultural produce.

Kollidam farmers to take out thanksgiving rally

A.V. RAGUNATHAN

The Kollidam-Keelanai Paasana Vivasayigal Sangam has thanked Chief Minister Jayalalithaa for having announced the construction of a barrage across the Kollidam, estimated to cost Rs. 400 crore, linking M. Adanur in Cuddalore district with Kumaramangalam in Nagapattinam district. The Sangam that met here on Thursday passed a resolution in this regard, stating that it would not only enhance irrigation prospects but would also ensure drinking water supply to the people living along the course of the river for generations to come. To express gratitude to the Chief Minister for her gesture the Sangam had decided to take out a motorcycle rally from Kattumannarkoil to Cuddalore on September 17. Sangam president P. Vinayagamoorthy told *The Hindu* that earlier the farmers under the Sangam banner took out a two-day motorcycle rally from Lower Anicut to Cuddalore for the same cause. Later, on last July 26 when the Sangam members attempted to take out another rally insisting upon the same demand from Kattumannarkoil to Cuddalore they were arrested by the police and now the Sangam had decided to take out a thanksgiving rally as its efforts in this direction had borne fruits. In another resolution, the Sangam appealed to the Chief Minister to construct one more barrage in the upstream of the Lower Anicut to facilitate the Veeranam ayacutdars and Chennai residents to get water supply throughout the year. In yet another resolution, the Sangam stated that seawater incursion through the Kollidam was posing a challenge as it turned the subsurface water saline for over 25 km inland. If such a phenomenon were to be reverted a bed dam ought to be built across the Kollidam at Vallambadugai area. The Sangam alleged that about 50 per cent of the petitions, seeking patta transfer and issuance of encumbrance certificates, handed over to the officials during the Jamabandhi sessions, were pending clearance for the past three years. It called for speeding action in this regard. It called for an enquiry into the manner in which the funds meant for maintenance of the water sources were being spent.

BJP'S reaction

V. Rajarathinam, treasurer of the Cuddalore district unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party, in a statement issued here stated that the CM's announcement on the barrage was a victory for the BJP. He noted that last year advocate K. Rajendran, who is a general body member of the party, filed a public interest petition in the Madras High Court seeking constructions of barrages across the Kollidam. The State government had responded by stating that it would study the feasibility of such a proposal. The announcement had now come as a sequel to it, Mr. Rajarathinam added.

U.P. sugar crisis will be resolved soon: Paswan

To resolve the ongoing crisis in the sugar industry in Uttar Pradesh, Union Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan on Thursday said he would soon hold a meeting with all the stakeholders — Food Ministry officials, mill-owners and farmers. To find a solution, “all three stakeholders need to come under one line,” Mr. Paswan told reporters here. The sugar industry crisis in Uttar Pradesh, the largest cane-producing State in the country, has intensified with cash-starved private sugar mills threatening to shut down operations in the coming season that starts in October. The mill-owners contend that the State government had arbitrarily fixed the price at a high level due to which they were unable to make payments to farmers on time and their arrears had mounted to Rs. 7,000 crore. Mr. Paswan said the government was taking steps to resolve the situation and said the sugar debt had been brought down from Rs 13,000 crore to Rs. 5,041 crore. To encourage sugar exports, he said the government would maintain the procurement price of Rs. 3,300 per quintal. Mr. Paswan further said he had proposed to increase the import duty on sugar from 15 per cent to 40 per cent to benefit producers. The Lok Jan Shakti chief, who was in Mumbai to attend a conference, also defended the sacking of Kamla Beniwal as Mizoram Governor, saying that Governors under the previous regime should have resigned on their own when the new government came to power. Mr. Paswan, whose party joined the National Democratic Alliance just before the Lok Sabha elections, pledged his support to the Mahayuti, the Bharatiya Janata Party-Shiv Sena led grand alliance in Maharashtra for the Assembly elections due in October. He said his party would be a part of the Mahayuti but did not comment if it would contest the elections. “We will not break the alliance on the issue of seats,” he said. Mr. Paswan also took a jibe at the newly stitched alliance between Nitish Kumar’s Janata Dal (United) and Lalu Prasad Yadav’s Rashtriya Janata Dal in Bihar, terming it “political opportunism.” Commenting on Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi’s new-found “aggression” in Parliament, Mr. Paswan asked, “What other choice does he have?” The Food Minister also said that the government was considering a proposal to make the consumer redressal mechanism as an “authority” to cut the undue delay faced by consumers in consumer courts.

Rs. 206.78-lakh plan to boost coir units in T.N.

The Coir Board has drawn up an Action Plan for the current financial year 2014- 2015 to develop the coir industry in Tamil Nadu at a cost of Rs. 206.78 lakh, according to G. Bhoopalan, Regional Officer, Coir Board, Pollachi. He was delivering a speech at the one-day training programme for the entrepreneurs to modernise the industry and go for value addition held here on Wednesday. Mr. Bhoopalan said that under the Rejuvenation Modernisation Technology Upgradation scheme (REMOT) it was proposed to set up 155 coir based units in the State. For the purpose of giving subsidy up to 40 per cent of the total project cost of these units a sum of Rs. 338 lakh had been set aside. Mr. Bhoopalan further said that for increasing productivity, facing competition and achieving sustainable development of the industry the Centre had announced the creation of the Scheme Fund for Regeneration of Traditional Industry (SFRUTI). Accordingly, the scheme was being implemented in six places in Tamil

Nadu, and Cuddalore being one among them. As a result the production of coir articles had increased tremendously, widely capturing the domestic and export markets. District Collector S. Suresh Kumar who inaugurated the workshop said that the entrepreneurs should upgrade their production line to meet the modern day requirements. He also gave away certificates to those who had completed the training programme. General Manager of the District Industries Centre Rajaganesh was also present.

'Stop selling fertilisers at higher price'

Fertiliser sellers should not sell fertilisers more than the price printed on the bags. They should also issue receipts while selling fertilisers, Collector Darez Ahamed has said. Presiding over a meeting of private fertiliser sellers and those in the primary agricultural cooperative societies here on Thursday, Mr. Ahamed said the sellers should function within the scope of the Fertiliser Control Order, 1985. The sellers should display the fertiliser stock availability and price list in their respective establishments. They should also display the licence obtained for selling fertilisers, the Collector said. Fertiliser companies should increase the number of their direct sellers in Perambalur district. Mr. Ahamed said the district had adequate stock of fertilisers and preparatory steps had been taken to ensure their availability during the forthcoming crop season. A guide containing the guidelines to be adhered to by the sellers were distributed to them on the occasion.

Pudukottai farmers delighted at CM's decision

The announcement of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa on sanctioning a Government Agricultural College and Research Institute at Kudumianmalai in the district has been welcomed by all sections of society, particularly farmers. A cross-section of the people of the district said that it was a felt need of farmers of the district for guiding farmers and upgrading farming technology in the district. The selection of Kudumianmalai for this project, where already Anna Agricultural Farm and Agriculture Research Institute exists, is ideal as it will expedite the setting up of the new facility without any hassle. Ramatheertar, president, District Farmers' Federation, said it was a felt need and would even enhance the research and extension services by the Anna Farm. The adequate infrastructure readily available should be utilised for starting the college. G.S. Dhanapathy, district chairman, Farmers' Federation of India, pointed out that the institute would motivate the local youths to take to agricultural courses. It would contribute to the local area development, besides assisting farmers through research and development programmes. M. Madhavan, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, suggested the starting of government medical and engineering colleges in the district.

Federation of Farmers Clubs gets loan



S. Narasimhan, Chief Regional Manager, Indian Overseas Bank, handing over loan cheque to Muthamizhselvan, president of the Federation of Farmers' Clubs, in Lalgudi on Thursday. The Lalgudi block Federation of Farmers Clubs has been sanctioned Rs. 10 lakh by the Indian Overseas Bank at a function held in Lalgudi on Thursday. The loan is in appreciation of the endeavour taken by a group of 27 farmers' clubs formed by the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) in Lalgudi block. This is the first federation to be set up in the district and is a registered under the Societies Act. The federation would play a vital in soil and water testing, procurement, and sale of inputs such as seed, fertiliser and pesticides, technology transfer, setting up of demo plots, supply of farm equipment on rental basis, marketing of agricultural produce, ensure credit linkage with banks, and stabilise resource through share capital from members. S. Narasimhan, Chief Regional Manager, Indian Overseas Bank, who gave away the loan to the Muthamizhselvan, president of the federation, appealed to the federation members to utilise the loan for stepping up agricultural productivity. The bank would cater to the needs of the federation. S. Prabakaran, Lead District Manager, said the federation would, in turn, sanction loans to its members for agriculture-related activities. He said the federation accounted for 27 farmers' clubs and each club had about 20 members. Thus, the loan would benefit about 500-odd members. S. Suresh Kumar, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, said the objective of floating the federation was to upgrade it into a producer company in course of time. He said it had been planned to start federation in each block in the district by motivating the farmer club members. A large number of farmer club members from Thuraiyur, Uppliyapuram, Manapparai, and Tiruchi were given an exposure to the functioning of the Lalgudi federation.

Farmers hail decision

M. BALAGANESSIN

Farmers of the central districts have welcomed the government's decision to release water from the Mettur dam from August 15. But they have pointed out that Karnataka has released water under compulsion, and this makes Tamil Nadu a storm water drain for the neighbouring State. S. Ranganathan, secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, said the irrigational needs of the delta farmers could be met only by the timely onset of monsoon. "We are hopeful the monsoon sets in with assured supply." The water level in the Mettur dam now stood at 94 feet with a storage equivalent to 50 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet). More water will be required for

irrigating 12.5 lakh acres under paddy in the delta, which, he hoped, would come during the monsoon. Referring to the direct sowing technology adopted by farmers of the Vennar division, he said timely steps for releasing subsidy and water to these farmers would encourage them a lot. V. Dhanapalan, general secretary of the Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, said the water release would benefit both the long- and short-duration 'samba' varieties. He, however, said Karnataka discharged water to protect its dam. Only the surplus waters came to the rescue of the delta farmers. Mahadanapuram V. Rajaram, working president of the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association, said the available water should be optimally used for irrigating the samba crop through effective storage. The barrage at Kattalai would come in handy. The Chief Minister's announcement met the demands of the farmers to a great extent. Meanwhile, the Agriculture Department has taken preliminary steps for facilitating 'samba' cultivation in Thanjavur district. An official release here said 1,000 tonnes of the seeds of ADT-16, BPT-5204, Savithri, Swarna-Sub, ADT-38 and CO 50 Thanjavur was stocked at agriculture extension centres. Another 1,902 tonnes of seeds had been stocked at primary agricultural cooperative credit societies and in private depots.

Water released from Amaravathi Dam



Water will be released at the rate of 300 cusecs for a total of 120 days in spells.

Farmers in Udumalpet and Madathukulam taluks, who have been confronted with dry conditions for the past many months, can now rejoice as Public Works Department (Water Resources Organisation) opened two sluices of Amaravathi Dam on Thursday. Water will pass through eight channels in the old ayacut namely Kallapuram channel, Ramakulam channel, Kumaralingam channel, Sarkar Kannadipudur old channel, Solammadevi old channel, Kadathur old channel, Kaniyur channel and Karatholvu channel to irrigate a total of 7,520 acres in its command area. "Water is being released at the rate of 300 cusecs for a total of 120 days in spells with each spell of water discharge lasting for a period of seven days followed by a five days break," PWD (WRO) sources told *The Hindu*. At the time of release, the water level in the reservoir area of the dam stood at 65.58 feet against the maximum of 90 feet. The inflow was 1,214 cusecs. PWD sources added that of the 300 cusecs outflow, 50 cusecs was meant exclusively for irrigation and the remaining for irrigation as well as for power generation.

Kuruvai being raised on 25,569 hectares in Tiruvarur

An extent of 25,569 hectares of land has been covered under Kuruvai in Tiruvarur district exceeding the target of 24,800 hectares fixed under the special package scheme introduced by the State government recently.

Prompt distribution

Effective implementation of the package scheme and prompt distribution of bio-fertilizer and zinc sulphate and gypsum and other agricultural inputs has resulted in the achievement of the area over and above the target, said Collector M. Mathivanan here on Thursday.

Appeal to farmers

In a press release, the Collector appealed to Samba and Thaladi farmers to take advantage of seeds and mechanisation equipment, including tractors available at all agricultural extension centres in the district. He appealed to farmers to immediately contact agricultural engineering or agricultural extension officers for details.

Register seed farms: official

To ensure distribution of quality certified seeds to farmers, seed farms should be registered with Seed Certification Department here, Assistant Director of Seed Certification, T. Bharathi, said here on Thursday. Authorities would inspect seeds before certifying them. Subsequently, seeds originated from farms would be processed and cleaned to meet required standards of sampling. Only after confirmation that they maintained the required amount of germination and minimum moisture content, the department would award the seed certificate tag, Mr. Bharathi said. As per sowing report norms, any farmer with a maximum holding of 25 acres could register with the Seed Certification Department through Assistant Directors of Agriculture of their blocks.

Mettur dam to be opened on August 15

SRUTHISAGAR YAMUNAN

It will help in samba cultivation on 12 lakh acres



In a major relief to Cauvery delta farmers, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa said on Thursday that the Mettur dam would be opened on August 15 for the cultivation of the 'samba' paddy crop. Making a statement in the Assembly, she said the opening of the dam was made possible by heavy rains in the catchments in Karnataka and Kerala. While the dam is conventionally opened on June 12, this was not possible this year as the level was only 44.4 feet. But, on Wednesday evening, the level touched 93.24 feet. "Anticipating that the south-west monsoon in the catchments would be better and

given the current level in the dam and going by the prediction of a normal north-east monsoon, I am happy to announce the opening of the dam on August 15 that will help farmers undertake samba cultivation on 12 lakh acres,” Ms. Jayalalithaa said.

DSS wants title deeds given to bagair hukum farmers

Members of the Hassan district unit of Dalit Sangharsh Samiti on Thursday staged a protest urging the State government to grant the bagair hukum land to those cultivating it for many years. Members of the DSS and farmers from Hadlagere and Gonisomanahalli in Belur taluk, Musathur in Arkalagud, who had been cultivating bagair hukum land in villages, took out a rally from the Hemavati statue to the Deputy Commissioner’s office here, where they staged a dharna. The protesters said that the bagair hukum farmers had applied for ownership rights several times, but there was no action from the officials.

Farmers worried about fungus disease

Areca growers in Sirsi, Siddapur and Yellapur taluks are worried about spreading of fungus disease called Koleroga to tender areca bunches and falling of immature areca pods due to incessant heavy rain since two weeks. Most of the farmers are busy in sprinkling fungicides for the second time hoping to control the disease.

‘Adopt drip irrigation to save water’

M.B. Patil, Minister for Water Resources, said that the State government is thinking of introducing drip irrigation in sugarcane cultivation. We could save the precious water by implementing drip irrigation system. Many parts of the State were facing acute shortage of water during every summer. It is essential to save water and adopt modern agricultural practices, including drip irrigation, Mr. Patil said, while addressing a gathering at Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS), after offering bagina on Wednesday. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others were present.

Minister for greater role of Kudumbasree in agriculture

SARATH BABU GEORGE

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has urged the Kudumbasree Mission to ensure greater involvement in the progress of agriculture sector. Inaugurating a public meet organised in connection with the 16th annual meet of the district unit of Kudumbasree Mission here on Thursday, Mr. Mohanan said the Kudumbasree movement has contributed immensely towards ushering in social progress. “Besides ensuring empowerment of women, Kudumbasree has proved that women were inferior to none in contributing towards rural economy. Their efforts in spreading awareness against social evils such as consumption of liquor have begun to yield results,” he said. According to him, there was immense scope for Kudumbasree in producing agricultural products. In addition, efforts could also be made to relaunch cultivation in fallow lands. The efforts of Kudumbasree workers could be channelised for mechanised farming techniques and thereby improve productivity several manifold. The State, which remained backward in milk production, could also benefit

through Kudumbasree's involvement in the dairy sector, he said. Alappuzha Municipal chairperson Mercy Diana Macido presided over the function.

Poultry farmers deny reports on antibiotics

The State Poultry Farmers Association has come out against recent reports that broiler chickens are being bred by injecting antibiotics and hormones to aid their growth. The leaders of the association said here on Thursday that false reports were being spread about broiler chicken at the behest of vested interests. N.K. Varghese, State joint secretary of the association, said it was a deliberate attempt by certain fish and meat lobbies to destroy the poultry sector in the State. The reports said a lab study released by the Centre for Science and Environment, a non-governmental organisation in Delhi, had found antibiotic residues in 40 per cent of the chicken samples tested in Delhi and NCR. The reports had adversely affected the industry as poultry farmers in Kerala were yet to adopt such practices, Mr. Varghese said. Moreover, antibiotic injections would not help induce the growth of chickens; rather these would adversely affect it, he said. K. Radhammapillai, professor, Poultry Science, Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Ambalavayal, and Abdul Muneer, assistant professor, Department of Poultry Science, Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University (KVASU), endorsed the statement of the association. Broiler chickens were bred scientifically to get optimum weight within six weeks. Poultry feed was given in such categories as pre-starter, starter, and finisher so that the chicken could gain maximum weight, Dr. Muneer said. Oral vaccination was given two times against Ranikatt and Infectious Bursal diseases, he said. Antibiotic administration was very rare in broiler chicken rearing, Dr. Radhamma Pillai said, adding that if needed, it was usually administered orally. Dr. Muneer said the major reasons for the quick growth of broiler were its genetic quality and scientific feed given in a systematic manner. The administration of antibiotics would not speed up growth, and such news was highly fabricated, he said.

Impact study

The Pharmacology Department and the Centre for One Health of the KVASU had decided to conduct an impact study on the issue in association with the Kerala State Poultry Development Corporation and the KVK, he said.

Youths drown while fishing

A 32-year-old youth drowned while he was fishing near the spillway of the Karapuzha dam in Wayanad district on Thursday. The Ambalavayal police identified the deceased as Noushad, son of Kunharuvu of Purayil at Kakkavayal. Meanwhile, the body of a tribal youth, who had gone missing on Monday while he was fishing near the spillway of the Banasura Sagar Dam, was found near the Mullankandy bridge.

Kudumbasree urged to boost farm production

'Mission a model for the nation and the world'



milestone: Rural Development Minister K.C. Joseph inaugurates a State-level seminar on the flagship programmes of the Kudumbasree Mission in Kannur on Thursday.—
PHOTO: S.K. MOHAN

Rural Development Minister K.C. Joseph has called for the Kudumbasree Mission's intervention for increasing agricultural production in the State. Inaugurating the State-level seminar on the flagship programmes of the Kudumbasree Mission on the occasion of its 16th anniversary, the Minister said that Kudumbasree units that had played a major role in providing financial security to women in the State, should now intervene to enhance agricultural production. Terming the Kudumbasree Mission as a model for the entire nation and the world, he said that its achievements were reflected in the well-being of thousands of families across the State. The success was made possible through initiatives to financially empower women through various entrepreneurial schemes, he noted. District panchayat president K.A. Sarala presided over the function. She also released the logo of the producer company of goat farmers formed under the Kudumbasree Mission in the district. The seminar on the flagship programmes of the Kudumbasree Mission, organised in connection with the anniversary celebrations, was attended by 400 delegates including 140 women.

Scientific production of exotic fruits stressed



Srinath Dixit, ICAR project director, inaugurating a workshop on exotic fruits at Thelliyoor on Thursday.

Scientific production of exotic fruits such as Mangostein, Rambutan, Pulasan and Durian could bring about manifold revenue increase in a sustainable way, Srinath

Dixit, project director of Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), Zone-VIII, has said. Dr Dixit was inaugurating a two-day State-level workshop on tropical exotic fruits, 'Falam-2014', organised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra at the KVK campus at Thelliyoor on Thursday. According to Dr Dixit, the farmers should find out better ways for the marketing of their products in the globalised scenario. He stressed the need for forming a collective of the farmers for marketing of exotic fruits produced at their farm so as to earn better profit. Joseph Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of Mar Thoma Church, presided over the inaugural function. The Metropolitan expressed hope that the two-day workshop would pave the way for giving better awareness to the farmers on the cultivation as well as the huge marketing potential of the tropical exotic fruits. P.V. Balachandran, Director of Extension at the Kerala Agricultural University, delivered the keynote address. C. Robert, KVK programme Co-ordinator; Thomas Jacob, State Agricultural Advisory Committee member; L. Beenakumari, Principal Agricultural Officer; R. Reghunathan Pillai, District Development Manager of NABARD; C.F. Santhoshkumar, National Horticulture Mission Deputy Director, and Rincy K. Abraham, organising secretary of the workshop, also spoke. The workshop, sponsored by the NABARD and National Horticulture Board, is aimed at exploring different methods of producing quality planting materials with special emphasis on canopy management and crop regulation in fruit farming. Dr Robert said the workshop would also help bringing together knowledge in the post-harvest management of tropical exotic fruits. Addressing the technical sessions, many experts pointed out that Pathanamthitta district, with a good number of expatriate population, has got a rich germplasm collection of exotic fruits such as Rambutan, Mangosteen, Pulasan, and Durian that exhibit diversity in growth, flowering, fruiting habits and characteristics. Absence of appropriate scientific production practices, identified varieties, post-harvest management and marketing have been identified as major impediments in promoting the cultivation of these exotic fruits as a profitable venture, they said. An exhibition of exotic fruits has also been organised as part of the workshop.

Lauds progressive farmers

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao wanted all the farmers of Telangana to learn cultivation methods and cropping patterns from the farmers of this agriculturally rich village to improve productivity and achieve self-sufficiency. Showering praises on this village in Armoor mandal on his first visit after becoming Chief Minister, he said the cropping pattern being followed by farmers here was ideal for all villages. Farmers here had never hankered after paddy cultivation and achieved good yields in commercial crops using low quantity of water, he said in his interaction with the farming community on Thursday. On the occasion, the Chief Minister sanctioned additional platforms at market yard, a Panchayat Raj road, farm ponds, drip scheme, turmeric harvesters and solar fencing scheme to protect crops from wild boars, all worth about Rs.5 crore to the village.

Incognito visit

Recollecting his first visit to the village way back in 1986, he said then he had arrived here after becoming MLA of Siddipet. “I came alone driving my Fiat car and introduced myself as a journalist from Hyderabad. I was really thrilled to know that farmers here had fixed deposits worth about Rs.10 crore in two banks,” he said. “While leaving the village I disclosed my identity. The villagers said they would have felicitated me had I revealed earlier,” he said and offered to stay at the village on some other day and enjoy the famous non-veg dish named after it.

Help on the way, Chief Minister tells jowar farmers

P. RAM MOHAN



Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao interacting with people after a public meeting at Armoor in Nizamabad on Thursday.— Photo: K.V. RAMANA

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao promised the red jowar farmers that arrears owed to them by Markfed for purchases of their produce would be paid within a week. “Officers will knock your doors with cheques within a week. I know the problem as I myself consoled the farmers injured in firing and lathi-charge resorted to by police when farmers agitated for payment of dues some four five years ago. Then I was in Karimnagar and drove straight to this town learning the incident,” he said in response to the appeal made by local MLA A. Jeevan Reddy to release the Rs.11.50 crore arrears to farmers. Addressing a well-attended public meeting here on Thursday, he reiterated that his government was committed to distribute cultivable land at the rate of three acres to each landless Dalit family and implement it in letter and spirit. If a Dalit family was owning two acre or one acre of land the government would provide the remaining land by purchasing it from private individuals, he said. That apart, he said the government would also take care of sanctioning electricity connection to their farm lands and providing other inputs and implements free of cost. Similarly, all promises made in the party manifesto would be implemented and every eligible homeless household will be provided with a two-bed room pucca house, he added. Showering several sops to the town he said he would ensure the construction of the new municipal office, air conditioned meat market and vegetable market, a dhobi ghat and upgradation of municiff court. “I would write a letter to the Chief Justice of High Court requesting him to upgrade the court soon,” he said. Mr. Rao, earlier, on his maiden visit to the town after taking over the reins of the government laid the

foundation at the Ambedkar Chowrasta to the drinking water scheme to be constructed with an outlay of Rs.114 crore. He said that the scheme intended to supply Godavari river water to the town. The local MLA Asannagari Jeevan Reddy presided over the meeting. Minister for Agriculture Pocharam Srinivas Reddy, MPs K. Kavitha and B.B. Patil, MLCs and MLAs, ZP chairman D. Raju, municipal chairperson Swathi Singh Bablu and Collector Ronald Ross were present.

Centre urged not to change paddy levy

B. CHANDRASHEKHAR

The Government of Telangana on Thursday addressed a letter to the Centre requesting the latter to exempt Telangana from reduction of paddy levy from the existing 75 per cent to 25 per cent from the current kharif season. The government wanted the Centre to retain the existing paddy levy at 75 per cent. The reduction in levy on such a large scale is likely to impact directly the farmers, particularly on ensuring minimum support price to the produce as the central procurement agencies such as Food Corporation of India (FCI) would proportionately cut down its paddy procurement here. Further, it would burden the government in the subsidised rice scheme as the millers' supply of rice to FCI would also go down. When contacted, official sources told *The Hindu* that Minister for Finance and Civil Supplies Etela Rajender wrote a letter to Union Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Ram Vilas Paswan on Thursday requesting the latter to retain the existing levy percentage in Telangana highlighting that it would directly impact the MSP and would act as an anti-farmer measure. Not sure about the Centre's response on the issue, the State Government has decided to make arrangements on its own to increase the paddy procurement through State-level agencies such as Markfed and Primary Agricultural Cooperative Societies (PACSS) in addition to procurement done by women self help group -- IKP centres. Officials in the Civil Supplies Department stated that there was a record procurement of 24.5 lakh tonnes of paddy during the rabi and kharif seasons of 2013-14. The previous best was in 2010-11 when 18.5 lakh tonnes of paddy was procured in Telangana. Admitting that storage would be a major problem, if the Centre fails to heed to the State's request the officials stated that additional procurement had to be done by the State Government to ensure MSP to farmers. "Otherwise, farmers will be exploited by middlemen, traders and millers badly and it will lead to another crisis in agriculture sector", a senior officer explained. The sources stated that the Civil Supplies Department had to make arrangement for procurement of not less than 50 lakh tonnes of paddy in case the Centre sticks to reduction in levy percentage.

Bengal gram growers gear up for stir

S. MURALI

IN DEEP TROUBLE		BENGAL GRAM GROWERS UPSET WITH BANKS SERVING AUCTION NOTICES AFRESH	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growers seek hike in import duties on Bengal gram varieties from abroad 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growers want Centre, State to explore new markets abroad to step up exports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No takers for hybrid Bengal gram, which was promoted as alternative to tobacco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growers saddled with over 22 lakh quintals of produce kept in cold storage units
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price of local variety dips to Rs. 2,800 per quintal, premium variety to Rs. 3,300 from a high of over Rs. 7,500 			

Upset with banks serving auction notices afresh, Bengal gram growers in Prakasam district have decided to step up their agitation from August 11 to plead with the Union and State governments to come to their rescue. "Our pleas for hike in import duties on Bengal gram varieties exported from Australia and other countries and for exploring new markets abroad to step up exports have fallen on deaf ears. There has been a lukewarm response to our demand for market intervention by the State government," lamented the growers at a meeting convened by the Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam-led Bengal gram Growers Association on Thursday. "We will observe relay fast from August 11 and if there is no response from the authorities within a reasonable time, we will lay a siege to the houses of State Transport Minister Sidda Raghava Rao and TDP MLAs," APRS district secretary D. Gopinath said. With no takers for hybrid varieties of Bengal gram, which had been promoted as an alternative to tobacco cultivated extensively in the district, the growers were saddled with 22 lakh quintals of the produce in cold storage units in the district, association district chairman Chinnam Ayyavarulu said. "The growers are in deep trouble with the price of local variety plummeting to a Rs. 2,800 per quintal and premium KAK2 variety to Rs. 3,300 from a very high price of Rs. 7,500 per quintal prevailing two years ago," they said. Auction notices served banks had come as a big shock to the growers eagerly expecting waiver of farm loans by the State government, they said. The Centre should impose anti-dumping duties on imported Bengal gram and use the amount for providing incentives to farmers and encourage indigenous pulse production in order to ensure nutrition security to the nation, they suggested.

Combating climate change is need of the hour, says scientist

Elucidating on the importance of teaching by reiterating the adage 'Teaching is a Noble Profession', A.P. State Council of Science and Technology (APCOST) Member Secretary Y. Nagesh Kumar urged the teachers to make best use of their talents in sensitising the students on current issues and mould them into responsible citizens of the country. Speaking at the inaugural of the two-day state level workshop for Resource Teachers, as a part of 22nd National Children's Science Congress-2014 (NCSC), at Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) here on Thursday, Mr. Kumar opined that such events would act as one of the best platforms for infusing qualities of good researcher and help them in their scientific pursuits. "This year's focal theme 'Understanding Weather and Climate Change' organised for the benefit of NCSC workforce by Department of Science and Technology (DST) will fulfil the purpose," he added. RARS Associate Director T. Giridhar Krishna maintained that scientists have a greater role in combating the ill-effects of weather and climate changes in the current situation. "Such threats have intensified across the world worsening the living conditions of several sections of the society. In addition to this, people should also change their lifestyle and follow organic methods of cultivation to prevent further damage to the environment," he maintained.

Students' role

Elaborating on various factors leading to weather and climate change, Regional Science Centre Tirupati (RSCT) Project Coordinator R. Manigandan opined that

involvement of students in the subject would be very useful as they would become aware of the do's and don'ts of protecting the environment.

Mamata orders curbs on potato export

Concerned over the rising prices of potato, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday directed officials of all departments to stop its export to other States and neighbouring countries immediately till prices returned to normal levels. Speaking after an emergency meeting of the Task Force on Price Rise, Agriculture Minister Purnendu Bose told reporters that the State government had already issued two orders — one to stop export of the vegetable and the other to fix a ceiling on stock of it by the wholesale and retail traders. “While traders in wholesale markets will be able to stock a maximum of 2,000 quintals of potato and 500 quintals of onion, the limit for traders in retail markets is 50 quintals for potato and 20 quintals for onion, ” Mr. Bose said. – PTI



Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Aug 8

Max 36° | Min 26°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 40
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:54
Sunset: 06:34
Barometer: 1002

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Saturday, Aug 9

Max 36° | Min 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Aug 10	Monday Aug 11	Tuesday Aug 12	Wednesday Aug 13	Thursday Aug 14
34° 26° Partly Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy	36° 28° Partly Cloudy	36° 27° Cloudy	35° 27° Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0
Humidity: 47
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:55
Sunset: 06:33
Barometer: 1005



Water for Samba from August 15: Jaya



Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa on Thursday announced that she had ordered release of water from the Mettur Dam from August 15, to enable cultivation of samba crop in the Cauvery Delta region. Jayalalithaa said the release, which had previously been rendered infeasible because of low water level on June 12, had now been made possible due to heavy rains of the southwest monsoon in catchments areas in Karnataka and Kerala. Jayalalithaa made the announcement under Rule 110 of the Tamil Nadu Assembly, as part of the ongoing Budget Session. "In prediction of continued rainfall in the catchment areas, the expectation of a healthy southwest monsoon and in view of the rising water level at the Mettur Dam, I am happy to announce that water will be released from the Mettur Dam for agricultural purposes from August 15. This will enable cultivation of samba crop on 12 lakh acres of agricultural land," Jayalalithaa told the Assembly. She also said the heavy inflow into the Mettur Dam would be diverted into the regions served by the Vennaru and Kallanai canals, and would be stored in tanks, ponds and lakes. Jayalalithaa said the decision to release water had come after consideration of the water level at the Mettur Dam, which recorded 93.24 ft, or 56.432 tmcft on Wednesday evening. She said the June 12 release of water had been deferred as the water level had only been at 44.4 ft at that point of time. The storage level of the 120-ft capacity Mettur dam stood at 94.25 ft on Thursday. A four-fold increase in inflow is expected owing to heavy discharge from Karnataka dams. About 79,000 cusecs is being released from Krishnarajasagar dam.

Water Level of Major Rivers Comes down



Even as water level of rivers Mahanadi, Devi and Paika has started to come down in Jagatisinghpur district, many remote areas remain cut off from the mainland. The

affected people continue to face a tough time as relief materials have not been reached them. According to official sources, nearly 25,000 people of Kujang, Tirtol, Biridi, Balikuda, Jagatsinghpur and Naugaon blocks have been severely affected by flash floods in Devi, Mahanadi and Paika rivers. Nearly 104 villages of the six blocks have been marooned. The administration has evacuated 7,246 people who have been taken shelter in safer places. The sources said cooked meals are being supplied to the affected people while relief materials of 9.71 quintals of rice, 71.06 quintals of flattened rice and seven quintals of molasses have been despatched to the affected blocks. Similarly, 10 tonnes of cattle feed have been supplied to the affected area. Nearly 12,000 hectares of crop field have been affected by the flood. Collector Satya Kumar Mallick said ODRAF teams have been engaged in rescue and relief operation and medical teams deputed to provide health services to the affected people including pregnant women and children in water-logged areas. Baby food is also supplied along with the relief materials, he added. As the district does not have adequate relief materials, the administration has sought the support from Paradip-based corporate houses including IOCL, Essar, PPL and Goa Carbon Ltd. The Collector said, "We have held a meeting with the officials of different corporate bodies in Paradip and asked them to supply relief materials to the flood affected people." The list of affected villages of six blocks has been submitted to the corporate bodies. All the schools in affected areas have been closed till the restoration of normalcy, he added.

This wonder gel is helping farmers save water while multiplying yields



Laxmi Lokkur, a farmer from the Udikeri village in Karnataka's Belgaum district, has been able to triple her yield over the past two years, despite the monsoon playing truant. The innovative farmer uses a polymer-based bio-degradable gel to 'irrigate' her 24-acre farm, where she grows vegetables, fruits and cereals. The gel, Pusa Hydrogel, a semi-synthetic super absorbent polymer, has been developed by the Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI). It is mixed with the soil on which the seeds are sown. The gel then absorbs water and expands to 300 times its original size. It sticks to the roots of the plants and when the soil moisture falls as the temperature rises, the gel sheds water to nourish the crop. Pusa Hydrogel has been in use since 2012, and its benefits are now being reaped across the country. Extensive trials have established that Pusa is non-toxic and bio-degradable, said HS Gupta, Director of IARI. It increases plant yield by 10-25 per cent. Even ITC Ltd has reported encouraging results from its fields, he said. IARI has licensed the technology to six Indian companies, including the Murugappa Group's Carborundum Universal India.

Lokkur, whose village is in a rain shadow area, told *BusinessLine* that before she started using the gel during the summer seasons, she cultivated only three to four acres of her farm due to water scarcity. Today, she uses up to 15 acres. Her cotton production had shot up to 12 quintals per acre compared with her neighbours' 6-8 quintals. Jowar was at eight quintals while other farmers got only three-four quintals. Similarly, she produced eight quintals of wheat compared with the four quintals produced by others. Jagadeesh Sunkad, Project Leader at Carborundum Universal, pointed out that because of the unpredictable monsoon and water availability for farming, crops across the country suffer due to either excess water in the fields or inadequate water. The gel mitigates the risks, if the water availability drops.

Saving water

It works as an anti-drought mechanism and reduces the water requirement of plants. Typically, a farmer irrigates his field every four days for high value crops, but with the gel, he can irrigate the farm every eight days, said Sunkad. "Farmers are able to defer irrigation cycles and hence use the water effectively. Due to use of Pusa, there is a 40 to 70 per cent saving of water. It also reduces fertiliser application — as it binds the fertiliser to the root, it reduces leaching of fertilisers," he said. The gel helps crops store water for a dry spell and aids farmers to cope with the increasingly unpredictable monsoon seasons.

Despite drop in supply, cotton wilts



Cotton prices have dropped sharply despite lower arrivals at the Bhoodapady Regulated Market Committee. "Only 84.6 tonnes arrived on Wednesday evening against 138.8 tonnes last week. But prices dropped by Rs. 600 a quintal. Buyers procured all the offerings," said Krishnasamy, Superintendent, RMC. At the Bhoodapady RMC, Bt Cotton fetched Rs. 4,850-5,150 a quintal and Surabi was sold at Rs. 5,500- Rs. 6,500. All the 2,352 bags (84.6 tonnes) put up for sale were sold. At the Sathyamangalam Cooperative Marketing Committee 2,000 bags (79 tonnes) of Bt Cotton, RCH and Brahma variety arrived for sale. They were sold at an average of Rs. 4,800-5,100. Prices were Rs. 500 lower than last week. Similarly, at the Anthiyur market, the quantity on offer was low and cotton fetched a maximum of Rs. 5,050.

Rubber tows futures, declines

Spot rubber prices ruled weak on Thursday following the declines in domestic futures. Sheet rubber RSS 4 weakened to Rs. 136.50 (Rs. 137.50) a kg, according to traders. The grade dropped to Rs. 137 (Rs. 138) and Rs. 134 (Rs. 135) respectively, as quoted by the Rubber Board and dealers. August futures declined to Rs. 135.15 (Rs. 137.80), September to Rs. 133.91 (Rs. 135.17) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs. 119.67 (Rs. 119.02) at Bangkok. August futures closed at ¥192.2 (Rs. 115.12) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange. Spot rubber rates (Rs./kg): RSS-4: 136.50 (137.50); RSS-5: 131 (132.50) Ungraded: 126 (126.50); ISNR 20: 116 (117) and Latex 60%: 106.50 (106.50).
Aravindan

Coffee could gain aroma on lower Brazil crop

After having gained 58 per cent in the last 12 months, global coffee prices could steam ahead further on forecasts of a lower Brazilian crop over the next two years. "Till recently, the Brazilian crop situation was unclear. But two weeks ago, we had reports that have cast a cloud not only over this year's crop but next year's also," said AK Bhandari, a coffee planter and former President of the United Planters Association of Southern India. Last week, Brazil's coffee council reiterated its estimate for Brazil coffee crop of around 40 million bags (60 kg each) for the next two years. Reports of the lower Brazilian crop pushed up coffee prices over 13 per cent in the last one month. On Thursday, Arabica coffee futures maturing for delivery in September ruled at \$1.88 a pound, down from \$1.925 at the start of the week. Robusta coffee, on the other hand, was quoted at \$1,987 a tonne for delivery in November. It has dropped over \$10 from last weekend. "There is a mismatch in coffee demand and supply. The average consumption is rising 1.5 per cent every year for Arabica and 2.2 per cent for Robusta. On the other hand, production is declining," said Bose Mandanna, a planter from Karnataka's Kodagu district and former Vice-Chairman, Coffee Board.

Global projections

The US Department of Agriculture has projected global coffee crop to be 1.5 million bags lower at 147.8 million bags in 2014-15 season starting October. Some experts, including from the International Coffee Organisation, project a shortfall of 10 million bags, the widest in the last nine years. "The problem with coffee is the lower projection for next season too," said Bhandari. "Brazil coffee initially experienced heavy rainfall and then a prolonged dry period. Both these weather vagaries have affected the crop. This will lower the crop by 4-5 million bags," said Mandanna. With prices topping \$2 a pound for Arabica last week, coffee could head for levels of \$2.40 and \$2.50 soon. "Once Brazil crop is harvested, prices could easily head to \$3 levels around January-February," said Bhandari. "Arabica prices could run to record within the next two years since input costs are going up," added Mandanna. Arabica coffee prices had surged to a record \$3.73 a pound in 1974 before dropping to \$0.40 in 2004.

“Coffee prices are moving sideways and are looking negative. Talks of prices rising to \$3 levels are exaggerated,” said Ramesh Rajah, President of Coffee Exporters’ Association. Robusta prices, on the other hand, are expected to rule firm and not drop below current levels. “Robusta has never dropped as badly as Arabica,” said Mandanna.

The India picture

The global outlook should sound sweet for Indian growers. “Arabica parchment prices could rise to Rs. 12,000 for a 50-kg bag in the next 12-24 months,” said Mandanna. Currently, Arabica parchment is quoted at Rs. 10,300-10,800 at the farmgate. Robusta cherry, the one that is in demand for exports for use in instant coffee, is quoting at Rs. 3,400-3,600. That brings the focus to the domestic crop, projected at a record 3.44 lakh tonnes by the Coffee Board for the 2014-15 season. Arabica will make up 1.09 lakh tonnes of the production and robusta the rest. Last year’s crop has been pegged at 3.04 lakh tonnes (1.02 lakh tonnes Arabica and 2.02 lakh tonnes Robusta). “Though the Coffee Board is taking all steps to protect the Arabica crop, at least 40 per cent of it has been affected by the white stem borer,” said Mandanna, adding that it could be lower. “The crop seems to be shaping up well but we will get a clear picture in October after the end of the monsoon. The borer menace will, however, have some effect on the crop,” said Bhandari. “The Coffee Board’s projection could turn out to be right since most growing areas, barring those in Tamil Nadu, have received ample rainfall. Until a few weeks ago, these areas were reported to be affected by drought but that is not the case anymore,” said Rajah.

Shipments

“Indian exports could gain if the Brazil crop turns out to be lower, though domestic consumption, of late, is on the rise,” said Bhandari. “All is quite on the export front as it is off-season but we expect shipments to pick up towards the year-end,” said Rajah. Provisional exports up to August 6 this year have been pegged at 2.08 lakh tonnes against 2.17 lakh tonnes during the same period a year ago. Two-thirds of the coffee produced in the country is exported and shipments hold key to better prices for growers.

Business Standard

This season, Gujarat farmers bet on cotton

Anticipating good returns, farmers in Gujarat have opted for cotton this year. As of August 4, cotton sowing had been completed across 2.82 million hectares (ha), 104 per cent of the average sowing area in the past three years (2.71 million ha), against 2.65 million ha in the year-ago period. As of August 4, 75 per cent of the sowing had been completed, against 61 per cent a week earlier. Experts say due to the delay in rains, farmers are wary of sowing groundnut and have, instead, opted for cotton, as this had fetched them better yields in the previous season. Also, the demand for

groundnut and groundnut oil was poor in the last season. For the groundnut crop, sowing has been carried out on 1.19 million ha, against 1.64 million ha during the corresponding period last year. Sowing for sesame, castor and soybean was completed on 107,500 ha, 188,400 ha and 56,200 ha respectively, according to data provided by the state agriculture department. "We did not expect farmers to go for cotton, considering the delay in the monsoon. But surprisingly, farmers have opted for this, primarily because of the high returns it fetched last year," said S R Chaudhary, director for agriculture, Gujarat. He added because of Bt-cotton cultivation, the per-hectare yield had fetched farmers better returns through the past few years.

GREEN PASTURES

Area covered in Gujarat this kharif, as of August 4 (in hectares)

Crops	Normal area (last 3-yr average)	Area of previous kharif season	Area so far in kharif 2014	% over normal
Cereals	1,537,100	1,379,500	8,98,200	58.43
Pulses	5,11,200	416,900	2,82,700	55.3
Oilseeds	2,426,300	2,085,100	1,553,800	64.04
Cotton	27,17,100	2,649,400	2,820,900	103.85
Groundnut	1,439,300	1,637,100	1,196,800	83.15
Total	8,680,000	7,813,900	6,500,600	74.89

Source: State Agriculture Department

Anand Popat, secretary of the Saurashtra Ginners Association, said, "Because of delayed rains, farmers have played it safe and diverted from groundnut to cotton. This is because in the case of the groundnut crop, there are more chances of failure due to delay in the monsoon." Also, demand for groundnut had been falling,

he added. Paddy sowing in the state has picked up pace, with 443,600 ha being covered, 60 per cent of the average sowing area in the past three years (736,700 ha). Fodder sowing has been completed on 662,900 hectares, against 711,000 hectares in the year-ago period, while sowing for vegetables has been completed on 125,300 hectares, 55 per cent of the total area, against 170,300 hectares in the corresponding period last year.

Irrigation Dept acquires most land in state



Maximum land acquisition was done by the Irrigation Department and it accounts for 60 per cent of the land acquisition done by the Karnataka government. Kapil Mohan, Water Resource Department Principal Secretary, revealed this in Mysore on August 6 and said the new Land Acquisition Act had come into force from this year replacing the old act of 1898. Compared to the old act, the new act was a better one and it provided for more compensation to the land owners. The new act considered the

environmental impact, resettlement and rehabilitation of land losers, besides land value. Hence, the compensation would be more. The act being more transparent, it would benefit farmers. Loopholes that lead to litigations in the previous act would be plugged leading to overcoming of litigation problems, he said. Inaugurating a two-day workshop for senior engineers on the 'New Legislation on Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Rehabilitation Act, 2013 (Right to fair compensation and transparency)', organised jointly by the Cauvery Neeravari Nigama Ltd. and Administrative Staff College of Hyderabad at the Vidyavardhaka Engineering College, Kapil Mohan said nearly 8-900,000 hectares of land would be acquired for irrigation projects. Most of this would be in North Karnataka. A separate commissioner would be appointed under the act to supervise land acquisition and rehabilitation. He would also address all problems of land acquisition. In view of the new act coming into effect, he said it would be vital to complete the projects on time as otherwise the cost would escalate and benefits of the project would be reduced. Timely implementation would benefit farmers too. Hence, engineers should know the act thoroughly so that they can give information sought by the farmers.

Mettur Dam set to open for irrigation from August 15



Tamil Nadu Government today announced that water from Mettur Dam would be released from August 15 for irrigation in the Cauvery delta areas. Making a suo motu statement in the state Assembly, Chief Minister J Jayalithaa said the water release would benefit farmers in cultivating samba paddy crop in 1.2 million acres. She said since the rainfall under Southwest monsoon has been increasing in Cauvery's catchment areas in Karnataka and Kerala, Harangi, Hemavati, Krishnarajasagar and Kabini dams are reaching their maximum capacity. Consequently, the water level at Mettur last evening was 93.24 feet (maximum level 120 feet) with the storage 56.432 TMC (capacity 93.4), she said. Traditionally, water is released from the Mettur Dam, the lifeline of Cauvery delta farmers, on June 12. But, this had been delayed in view of poor storage in the reservoir. Last year too, there was a delay and the water was released only on August 12. A report from Salem said that a PWD official at Mettur said that the water in the dam was likely to reach its full level of 120 feet by next week. The dam was getting an inflow of 79,000 cusecs due to release of surplus water from Krishnaraja Sagar, Kabini, Harangi and Hemavati reservoirs in Karnataka, he said.

Potato exports to Pak push up domestic prices



A surge in potato prices in the country is attributed to a sudden rise in export to Pakistan, helped by that country's removal of import duty on the commodity. Potato sold at Rs 1,415 a quintal in Agra a month earlier; it was Rs 1,670 a quintal on Thursday. The corresponding price in Kolkata was Rs 1,400 a quintal and Rs 1,600 a quintal. Pakistan has had a big shortage of potato since the start of March. In April, The Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet, a key policy making body in Pakistan, decided to lift the tariff on import of 200,000 tonnes, to ease prices. With prices continuing on an upswing in the Ramzan month, a decision was taken on July 19 for a further 100,000 tonnes of import at zero duty, to be continued till November 15. This week, though, export to Pakistan has reduced significantly, as their government has again imposed a duty on import. "Since August 1, potatoes are not going to Pakistan, as the duty structure is not clear," said Ajit Shah, president, Horticulture Exporters Association. Between July 4 and August 4, India exported frozen potato worth \$391,110 through ports, with Pakistan accounting for 18 per cent of the value, the second highest, according to data from Infodrive India. According to informal estimates, 2,000 tonnes of potatoes were exported to Pakistan daily through the Attari-Wagah land route. Says Patit Paban De, a trader in this city: "Potatoes from West Bengal are not directly exported but as a huge quantity from UP, Gujarat and Punjab was going to Pakistan, there was a price rise in the past 15 days."

POTATO STATISTICS

Year	Area (‘000 ha)	Production (‘000 tonnes)
2011-12	1,906	41,482
2012-13	1,992	45,343
2013-14	2,023	46,394

Source: NHRDF

In the retail market, prices shot up to Rs 22-23 a kg; in Odisha, it went as high as Rs 40 a kg, after neighbouring West Bengal restricted the movement. Nearly 90 per cent of the crop in India is harvested between October and December. A small amount is harvested between August and September in parts of south India. Sowing is yet to begin in most areas. In 2013-14, India exported 166,642 tonnes, valued at nearly \$35 million. Sri Lanka, UAE, Mauritius, Nepal, Singapore, Maldives and Kuwait are the major buyers. "A significant amount of potato has been exported to Pakistan recently, although compared to India's total production it is not a very huge quantity," said, R P Gupta, director, NHRDF. In 2013-14, India produced nearly 46

million tonne of potatoes. According to informal estimates from traders, 2,000 tonnes of potatoes were exported to Pakistan per day through Attari-Wagah land route.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

PM Narendra Modi sticks to failed recipe in India's food inflation fight



It's been more than a month since Nirmala bought fresh tomatoes. A fourfold rise in prices since early June has made the essential ingredient in Indian curries and sauces a luxury she can no longer afford. "Buying tomatoes feels like buying jewellery," says the 29-year-old maid, who is struggling to make ends meet on her monthly pay of \$65 as prices for fresh staples such as onions and potatoes also soar in New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's election triumph in May had raised hopes of quick action to tackle India's recurring food price shocks. But, despite his strong economic record of running Gujarat, he has resorted to an old inflation playbook that contributed to the last government's crashing defeat. Just like his predecessor, Modi has imposed export curbs and cracked down on hoarding. While these steps can give brief relief, they cannot fix a dilapidated system controlled by middlemen. So far, the cash-strapped government has committed to invest less than one-tenth of the amount it estimates is needed to fix India's cold supply chain. It opposes the entry of foreign supermarket giants who might set up their own logistics. Its only innovation, a food price stabilisation fund, is at \$82 million derided as too tiny to make any difference in feeding the country's 1.2 billion people. Economists who had backed Modi to put Asia's third largest economy back on track are already expressing unease at the government's failure to lay out a credible inflation strategy, beyond short-term improvisation. Modi's approach is that of a "district collector" rather than a structural reformer, said Rajiv Kumar, a senior fellow at the privately-funded Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi. The reference is to India's army of low-level officials whose role - dating to British colonial rule - includes being a local tax man and administrator. "This is my fear about this government - that it is being captured by the bureaucrats," Kumar says. "Competition is the best short-term guarantee to reduce prices."

CHRONIC SHORTAGES

Officials privately concede that inward investment in multi-brand retail would help revamp an archaic distribution system that forces farmers to sell at regulated markets where middlemen command hefty markups. India is the world's second-biggest

producer of fruit and vegetables after China, but it battles chronic shortages as an estimated 18 per cent of the crop goes waste every year due to inadequate cold storage and refrigerated transport

Seed potato production centre may be set up in Kerala

The Central Potato Research Institute is mulling a seed potato production centre in Kanthaloor, Kerala. A team has started a feasibility study on this rain shadow village. "Though there are yet to be active potato cultivation areas on Kerala-Tamil Nadu border, there is potential for growing tuber crops in higher altitudes, says R Muthuvel, president of a farmer co-operative. "There has been resistance to commercial cultivation of potato in non-traditional areas because health standards of the seeds were not good enough," he said. It is the climatic and soil conditions in Kanthaloor that have interested the team. Researchers Dr Venkat and Dr Arathy have taken soil samples from Vattavada, Mattupetty and Munnar panchayats.

DECCAN Chronicle

Cauvery delta farmers hopeful of bumper crop as water level rises in Mettur dam



As the water level in Mettur reservoir further soared to 94.250 feet, the mood among lakhs of farmers in the Cauvery delta districts turned buoyant. Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's announcement in the assembly on Thursday that the Mettur dam will be opened on the Independence day,(15 August) for irrigating the samba crops renewed hopes of a harvest in the delta region this year. The water released from the Mettur reservoir in Salem district irrigates the paddy farms in 12 delta districts of Tamil Nadu. Every year, the massive shutters of the Mettur dam are lifted on 12 June and water is discharged till 28 January to irrigate the farm lands. This June, storage in the dam was woefully poor and the eager farmers were forced to miss the much-awaited 12 June release of water. However, the monsoon picked up momentum over the last fortnight. Storage in Mettur now stands at a comfortable 57.664 tmc while the dam is just 26 feet short of reaching its full height of 120 feet. The inflow into the reservoir was about 22,120 cusecs. According to the Cauvery Farmers' Protection Committee secretary, Swamimalai Vimalnathan, the Chief Minister's announcement has brought cheers among the farmers who were getting ready for the Samba cultivation. Tamil Nadu Farmers Association's Thanjavur district president R. Sugumaran said the government should immediately release the water without waiting till 15 August. The ground water in delta region has plunged to 200 feet and the immediate release of water from the Mettur dam will help recharge the ground water, according to

him. Pointing out that water did not reach the tail-end areas last year, Sugumaran urged the government to take measures to ensure that water reaches the tail-end areas this year. Meanwhile, following the announcement made by the Chief Minister to release water from Mettur Dam on August 15, food minister R. Kamaraj said that the timely release of water could bring down rice prices across the state. "While the price of rice is already being kept under control by the state government, timely supply of water could further boost production and bring down prices of the essential commodity," minister Kamaraj told Deccan Chronicle. He pointed out that at least 12 lakh hectares of land was being used for cultivation in the Cauvery delta region making the region largest producer of rice in the state. "While the state government does procure a sizable quantity of rice from delta farmers, they also supply to the private market depending on whichever is profitable to them," the food minister said. The state government's decision to release water from Mettur dam is expected to benefit farmers in Thanjavur, Tiruchy, Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Ariyalur and other districts that fall under the Cauvery delta region.

KRS level at maximum: Excess water released to Tamil Nadu



The water level in the mighty KRS reservoir touched the brim at 124.80 feet on Thursday. With rains continuing in the Cauvery catchment area and the inflow touching 46,058 cusecs, as much as 60,174 cusecs water was released into the river leading to Tamil Nadu from KRS and Kabini reservoirs. While KRS authorities had announced flood alerts and had warned people in low lying areas to protect their properties and move to safer places, Mandya district police have banned boating, swimming and other water sports in Ghosai Ghat, Triveni Sangam and Ranganthittu in Srirangpatna taluk. The Kodagu district administration has declared a holiday from Tuesday for schools which will remain closed on Friday too, Kodagu Deccan Chronicle office sources said. Kodagu recorded 53.46 mm rainfall on Thursday. So far from January, Kodagu has recorded an average 1978.47mm rainfall compared to 2653.54 mm rain during the same period the previous year. At Harangi, the inflow increased to 11,500 cusecs and the level stood at 2856.81 feet as against its capacity of 2859 feet. With heavy rains in Wyanad, the inflow into Kabini was 34,000 cusecs while the water level on Thursday was 2282.15 feet. To maintain the level, 34,000 cusecs was released into the river leading to Tamil Nadu.

Veterinary university sells cow urine, key to cancer cure



The next time you smell cow's urine, realise that it has medicinal properties. The Arya Vaidya Sala, the prominent ayurveda treatment and research centre at Kottakkal, Malappuram, has been successfully using it in its medicines to treat cancer. And the urine is provided by the desi (indigenous) cow population of the Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University's cattle farm at Pookkode, Wayanad. The first urine of the day collected straightaway from the cows without touching the floor is the major ingredient in countless traditional medicines for various ailments produced at AVS. AVS chief physician Dr K. Muraleedharan told Deccan Chronicle that many medicines with cow urine as ingredient had been used to correct various health conditions of cancer patients.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

India's water reservoirs at 57% of capacity in past week



Water levels in India's main reservoirs in the week to August 7 were at 57 per cent of capacity, down 13 percentage points from a year ago, government data showed on Friday. On a week-on-week basis, the figure has improved from the previous week's level of 46 per cent, as monsoon rains improved in western and eastern India with many areas witnessing floods. A late revival in this year's monsoon also helped raise the latest level above the 10-year average of 49 per cent for the week, easing concerns of a drinking water crisis. Level of water in reservoirs is vital for hydro power generation and irrigation. Reservoirs also provide water later in the year to irrigate winter crops such as wheat and rapeseed. The outlook for the second half of India's four-month monsoon has improved after some above-average rainfall that is also expected to spill over into next week.