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Hindustan Times

Statesman

The Times of India (N.D.)

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Tribune ✓

Hindustan (Hindi)

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The Times of India (A)

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Record low water inflow at Bhakra, Pong

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, JULY 19

The Bhakra and Pong reservoirs are receiving significantly low inflow, lesser than that in March, an official press release stated here on Thursday.

From March 1 to July 18, the Bhakra reservoir received 9,93,247 cusec days less inflow as compared to that during the same period last year. Similarly, the Pong reservoir too received 5,18,065 cusec days less inflow for the same period last year. On July 19, the inflow in Pong and Bhakra reservoirs was 80 and 38 per cent less, respectively, as compared to that on the same day last year. As on date, reservoir levels of Pong and Bhakra are lower by 36.88 ft and 77.2 ft, respectively, compared to the water level on the same day last year.

The inflow in the Satluj river from March 1 to July 10 was 46 per cent less compared to that recorded last year. It was, in fact, 8 per cent lesser than that during the driest year in the recent years which was 2004, the release stated.

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RIVER OF PLASTIC WASTE IN HIMACHAL



■ National Green Tribunal has pulled up the Himachal government after a video on dumping of waste in Ashwani Khadh river went gone viral on the social media. The NGT has directed the officials of the Himachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board to send a detailed report on the video, which shows the absence of a proper waste management system in the state.

HT PHOTO

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Rajasthan clears loan guarantee to farmers

Also relaxes two-child norm for government employees

MOHAMMED IQBAL
JAIPUR

In a populist move ahead of the State Assembly election, the Rajasthan Cabinet has decided to provide a guarantee to the State Apex Cooperative Bank to take a loan worth ₹5,000 crore from the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) for funding the State government's crop loan waiver scheme for farmers. The Cabinet has also relaxed the two-child norm for government employees.

In its meeting held here on Wednesday, the State Cabinet extended the time for organising camps to give loan waiver certificates to farmers till August 15, and approved 13 proposals for investments in different sec-



The loan waiver will benefit over 16.5 lakh farmers.

tors. The waiving of loans to the tune of ₹5,077 crore in the cooperative sector is set to benefit over 16.5 lakh farmers.

Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje presided over the Cabinet meeting.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Rajendra Rathore

said the clause in the government employees' service rules for compulsory retirement on the birth of a third child would be deleted, thereby relaxing the two-child norm introduced in 2002.

Investment proposals

Thirteen proposals for investments worth ₹6,000 crore in different sectors across the State were approved, said Mr. Rathore, while claiming that the projects would create thousands of jobs.

The investments would be made in the sectors such as cement, mining, textiles, agro-processing, plastic manufacturing, business process outsourcing, distilleries and beverages, and auto parts.

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TN farmers now hope for samba crop

M Manikandan

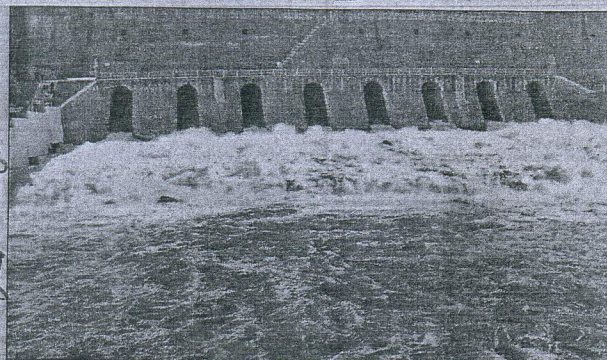
manikandan.mani@htlive.com

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Thursday opened sluice gates of the state's largest dam in Mettur to release water for the samba (long-term) cultivation in Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Nagapattinam and Trichy districts, the rice bowl of the south. This will allow farmers to go for samba paddy cultivation after six years of crop failures and drought.

The gates were opened as Stanley Reservoir's water level in Mettur crossed 100 feet for the 65th time since it was built in 1934, according to Tamil Nadu public works department records.

The level has been increasing since Karnataka began releasing water from Krishnaraja Sagar dam following heavy rains in the Cauvery river's catchment area. The water level in the dam reached 109 feet on Thursday, while its capacity is 120 feet.

Palaniswami is the first chief minister to open the gates. Local district collector and Public Works Department (PWD) officers had until now opened the gates to release water.



Officials have assured farmers that 20,000 cusecs of water would be released daily, enabling Samba cultivation

ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

"The legal struggle of (All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) AIADMK government in the footsteps of our late leader, former CM J Jayalalithaa, has enabled us to retrieve the rights of Tamil Nadu over Cauvery," Palaniswami said at the gates' opening event.

"In the first meeting of Cauvery Water Management Authority on July 2, Karnataka was ordered to release 31 TMC of water to Tamil Nadu."

PWD officials have assured the farmers that 20,000 cusecs of water would be released daily.

The farmers have started the preliminary works for samba

cultivation over 16.02 lakh hectares in the four Cauvery delta districts.

Cauvery Delta Farmers Protection Committee general secretary CS Dhanapalan said the Mettur dam's water level has crossed 100 feet for the first time since 2012-2013 season.

"The dam has reached 100 feet and we are hopeful of successful cultivation after six years of drought and crop failure issues."

Cauvery Delta Farmers' Association's Mannargudi S Ranganathan said it would take another 10-15 days for the water to reach the tail-end areas.

"So, farmers involved in the

Kurvai (short term) crop harvest will start the preliminary works for samba in the upcoming week. However, the government should also de-silt all the channels of Cauvery within July."

The state agriculture department on Wednesday advised farmers to take up the long-term variety (135 days), instead of midterm crops that the farmers had chosen in recent years, thanks to the water availability now.

"Since August 1 is the usual period for starting samba cultivation, the PWD should release 5,000 cusecs of water for drinking water needs until then. After that, the government can give 14,000 cusecs of water per day until the onset of the NE (north-east) monsoon," Dhanapalan said.

A Public Works Department official said the government has plans to regulate the water supply. "With the available water, we can ensure supply until September. At the time, the water availability of the dam would be around 50 feet. However, the onset of the NE monsoon could further help farmers. So, long-term crops will be the suitable ones for the present water condition."

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Kerala all-party team unhappy after PM meet

Jayanth Jacob

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NEW DELHI: An all-party delegation led by Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan met Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday to press for the Centre's help on a host of matters, but according to those in the meeting, it ended up in political bickering.

At the meet, the PM reportedly handed over a list of projects in Kerala to Vijayan saying that these would not be getting the "Centre's financial assistance", said members of the delegation. They said the nature of the projects was not shared by Vijayan.

The delegation comprised, Congress leader and leader of the opposition in the Kerala assembly Ramesh Chennithala and Kerala BJP general secretary AN Radhakrishnan, among others.

Its demands included raising



■ Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan (third from right) with members of the all-party delegation that met PM Modi on Thursday. ARVIND YADAV/HT

the allocation of food grains to the state for use under the public distribution system. The state's quota was drastically cut after the implementation of the food security act. Another demand was the start of the new railway coach factory in Kerala that was

announced in the Union budget in 2008-09. The delegation also wanted the PM to send a team to Kerala to evaluate the losses in the recent monsoon floods and provide compensation. Both Vijayan and Chennithala said it was a "disappointing meeting."

"The demands we raised didn't get a favourable response except on the issue of the flood relief," Vijayan said.

"It was totally disappointing. Even for the most pressing needs ... the PM was far from being compassionate", said Chennithala.

He said the delegation was surprised to see Modi handing over the "list of projects to the CM as it amounts to nothing but playing politics."

Radhakrishnan however, said, "The PM said the food security act applies to all states. Every state is same to him. He cannot do special favour to one state. But Modi said he would look into the demands made by each state in general." The only Union minister from the state, KJ Alphons, was not part of the delegation. "I am the only minister at the Centre from the state. Nobody has invited me," he said.

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Ganga in extremely bad state, says NGT

Says work done not adequate, regular monitoring required

NEW DELHI, JULY 19

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday expressed dissatisfaction over the cleaning up of Ganga and said the situation was extraordinarily bad and hardly anything effective had been done to clean it.

A Bench headed by NGT chairperson Justice AK Goel said despite claims by the authorities, the work done on the ground for Ganga rejuvenation was not adequate and regular monitoring was required to improve the situation.

The Green panel ordered survey to seek views of common man about what he feels on ground about the pollution in Ganga and said the feedback could be given through e-mail of the authorities concerned. The Bench also comprised Justices Jawad Rahim and RS Rathore, said.

The NGT had earlier rapped the National Mission for Clean Ganga for not filing a report on the steps taken by the Centre and the UP and Uttarakhand governments to clean

2,525 km
Total length of Ganga

800
tanneries' dump in it

₹20,000 cr
to clean it from 2015-2020

₹7,304.64 cr
spent up to March 2017



GANGA ACTION PLAN

Launched in two phases by then PM Rajiv Gandhi on Jan 14, 1986, to free Ganga of pollution, domestic sewage and industrial chemical wastes. In first phase, it covered 25 towns in 3 states; in second, 59 towns in 5 states

RIVER BASIN AUTHORITY

Established on February 20, 2009 by the UPA government for ensuring effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river by adopting a river basin approach

NAMAMI GANGE

Mission set up by the Narendra Modi govt in 2014 to accomplish twin objectives: abatement of pollution, river rejuvenation

the river in the stretch between Gomukh and Unnao.

The NGT had passed directions to rejuvenate Ganga, declaring 'No Development

Zone' an area of 100 metres from the edge of the river between Haridwar and Unnao and prohibiting dumping of waste within 500 metres from it. — PTI

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AJAY VIR JAKHAR

THE MSP ILLUSION

Raising procurement prices of kharif crops will only give false hope to farmers

HAS THE WINTER of farmers' discontent turned into a glorious summer by the significant hike in minimum support price (MSP) for kharif crops announced two weeks ago? The hike is unlikely to stem the rural unrest that is gnawing into the ruling alliance's vote-bank. The PM has had to personally defend the government's programmes that have gone awry.

This is not to suggest that the intent of the programmes rolled out under the direct control of the PMO was suspect. However, it must have been humbling to be so wrong about so much for so long. To overcome more antipathy from farmers, the government eventually took its first credible steps to shore up prices last year by imposing tariffs on grain imports. However, that announcement came too late. It has now announced a higher MSP, which is far below the recommendations (C2+50 per cent) of the National Farmers' Commission headed by M S Swaminathan — also one of the promises in the BJP's manifesto for the 2014 elections. Farmers feel betrayed as this does not fully factor in the over 20 per cent higher input costs on account of GST and last year's hike in prices of diesel and fertilisers. The commitment to procure all crops at the declared MSP is also misleading since it is not practically possible for the government to provide for the C2+50 per cent margins.

The government's self-congratulatory attitude on higher MSP is a wrong political strategy. It increases farmers' expectations

15/20

Rather than opt for big ticket reforms, the government needs to look at marginal improvements. These, if consistently implemented over time, will deliver the required change. The system lacks the skill to diagnose its own incompetence. An independent commission of farmers must be constituted to review government programmes, which are supposedly benefiting the farming community.

for actual procurement and profits. Unrealised expectations then add fuel to the fire of dissatisfaction.

The main grouse for the majority of farmers is that prices of the crops for which there is no support price (potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic) have touched rock bottom in the past one year, and only around 10 per cent farmers will benefit from such procurement. The government also has to come to terms with the fact that the reasoning of the farmers is difficult to negate on social media or by loud propaganda. For example, last year's MSP of maize was Rs 1,425 per quintal but farmers in Bihar sold it for an average price of Rs 900. An acre yields about 30 quintals and now the price has been hiked by 19 per cent to Rs 1,700 per quintal. If the market price remains the same (most likely), the farmer will perceive his loss at more than Rs 20,000 per acre. They will make similar loss calculations for other crops.

In spite of the commendable record of procuring pulses last year, ground realities have not changed. Programmes framed by a class of people who are better at explaining than understanding have left the government with huge stockpiles. These are now being offloaded in local markets and the ensuing glut is extending the period of depressed farmgate prices. At the same time, the government has also suffered considerable loss. A perfect example is moong. Its MSP last year was Rs 5,575 per quintal. The government is now offloading the procured

stocks at about Rs 4,600 per quintal, consequently suppressing farmgate prices. At this rate, let alone receive the new MSP of Rs 6,975 per quintal (a 25 per cent hike), farmers will not even receive the older MSP. A package of such large-scale procurement should have a component where estocks, on procurement, have to immediately be dumped abroad at prevailing international market prices, even if that entails a loss.

Most government programmes for farmer welfare have not given the desired results. Rather than opt for big ticket reforms, the government needs to look at marginal improvements. These, if consistently implemented over time, will deliver the required change. The system lacks the skill to diagnose its own incompetence. An independent commission of farmers must be constituted to review government programmes, which are supposedly benefiting the farming community.

Indian farmers have, for long, ensured that the country does not face any food shortage. The time has finally come for the PM to declare: "I am confident Indian farmers can feed the nation; I annul the Essential Commodities Act". The most critical reform to revolutionise Indian agriculture requires no money. It requires something far harder to acquire — learning to unlearn yesterday's wisdom.

The writer is Chairman Punjab State Farmers' and Farm Workers' Commission

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A vote of no confidence from the farmers

There is enough evidence to show that the government has failed farmers and agricultural labourers in a big way



YOGENDRA YADAV
AVIK SAHA

As the Lok Sabha debates the vote of no confidence today, representatives of farmers from across the country will be marching outside Parliament under the banner of All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCO), an umbrella body of 201 farmer organisations. Farmers have already passed a vote of no confidence against this government. Far from helping the farmers, this government has actually harmed them in their hour of crisis. This is a strong indictment, backed by solid evidence.

Here, it is not conclusive to give data on sluggish agricultural growth during this regime. Agricultural production suffered due to consecutive droughts for which it is unfair to blame the government. Nor can we use the data on farmer suicides to make a conclusive argument, as this government has tinkered so much, both with the definition of the term and data collection on it, that the data has been made unusable. Further, in any case, the data on farmer suicides has not been released for 15 months now.

Ten arguments

Here are ten concrete, evidence-based, arguments on why the farmers of India express their vote of no confidence against this government.

First, this government has failed to act on any of its major election promises in 2014. The Bharatiya

Janata Party (BJP)'s manifesto promised nothing short of "highest priority to agricultural growth, increase in farmers income and rural development". The government's own Economic Survey 2018 has already conceded that farmers' real income has "remained stagnant", recording a 1.9% growth over four years. The concrete promise of higher public investment in agriculture did not materialise; in fact, it has declined in terms of its share of GDP.

The new farm insurance scheme, the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, has consumed thrice as much money as earlier schemes without either increasing the proportion of farmers who benefited from it, or giving a fair claim to the farmers. The promise of "welfare measures" – for farmers above 60, small farmers and farm labourers – was forgotten. The National Land Use Policy was never enacted. The Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act was not reformed. We don't even have a 'promises vs. delivery' report card yet.

The MSP promise

Second, the Narendra Modi government actually renege on its biggest promise of ensuring "50% profit over the cost of production" to the farmers. In February 2015, it filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court refusing to implement this promise on the ground that it will "distort" the agricultural market. As pressure from farmer organisations mounted, the government shifted the goalpost in the 2018 Budget by changing the definition of cost of production for the purpose of calculating the Minimum Support Price (MSP).

Third, not only did the government not fulfil its promise of



"cost+50%" as MSP, it did not even maintain the routine annual increase in MSP. It began this by stopping the bonus over the MSPs announced by State governments. Over the nearly five-year period, the percentage increase in MSP by this government has actually been lower than the hike by both the previous governments.

Even this government's much-publicised recent hike in MSP this year is lower than the year-on-year increase announced by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2008-09. The Modi government's failure to implement the MSP that it announced forced the farmers into distress sale of Kharif and Rabi crops, amounting to at least ₹50,000 crore, in 2017-18.

Fourth, this government is guilty of perhaps the most lackadaisical response to nationwide droughts in 2014-15 and 2015-16. The central government's response was limited to a revision in the eligibility cap for compensation and a routine raise in the compensation amount but also included cuts in contribution to States from the National Disaster Relief Fund. Despite repeated push from

the Supreme Court, the government did not take any proactive steps in terms of either declaration of drought, improvement in ration delivery, or response to drinking water crisis specified in its own Manual for Drought Management. The Supreme Court had to reprimand the central government.

Choking the MGNREGS

Fifth, the Modi government's lack of political will in implementing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) has hit the rural poor in general and farm labourers in particular. After making a determined but unsuccessful attempt to dismantle the MGNREGS, the Modi government has choked this programme of adequate and timely funds and reneged on its legal obligation to provide timely wages and compensation for delayed payments.

Sixth, from imposing Minimum Export Price on potatoes in 2014 to importing sugar from Pakistan, this government has followed anti-farmer trade policies. Farm exports were systematically discouraged, leading to a decline in agricultural exports from \$43 billion on 2013-14 to \$33 billion in 2016-17. At the same time, import of lentil, chana, wheat, sugar and milk powder was allowed that led to a crash in crop prices.

Seventh, the Modi government's ill-advised and shoddily implemented policy of demonetisation dealt a severe blow to agricultural markets, especially to fruit and vegetable markets, just when the farmers were recovering from the consecutive droughts. A sudden shrinking of cash led to demand contraction and fall in prices, whose effects are being felt even now.

Eighth, the government's crude attempt to regulate livestock market by imposing ban on livestock movement and its protection to those guilty of lynching the suspected "cow smugglers" has disrupted livestock economic cycle, leading to loss of income on the one hand and aggravation of the widespread problem of animals destroying crops on the other.

Ninth, for the *adivasi* farmer, this is surely the most insensitive government. In a series of moves, this government has diluted the Forest Rights Act and various other environmental and forest conservation laws substantially in order to help the transfer of common land and water resources from the *adivasis* to industry.

And finally, the Modi government made not one but four attempts to bring an ordinance so as to nullify the historic Land Acquisition Act of 2013 and take away the few concessions that farmers had won after 120 years. Further, the government has effectively bypassed this law in the land acquisitions done by central agencies like the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and has also allowed State governments to nullify the provisions benefitting the land-owning farmers.

Notwithstanding its recent attempts at damage control, this government has justly acquired the reputation of being the most anti-farmer government in the history of independent India. Whatever the fate of the no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, the Modi government would find it hard to win a vote of confidence brought by the farmers.

Yogendra Yadav is national president, Swaraj India. Avik Saha is the national convener of Jai Kisan Andolan

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कावेरी प्राधिकरण पर चर्चा की मांग करेंगे सांसद

नयी दिल्ली, (भाषा) पार्टी लाइन से ऊपर उठकर कर्नाटक के सांसदों ने कावेरी जल प्रबंधन प्राधिकरण (सीडब्ल्यूएमए) पर संसद में चर्चा कराने पर जोर देने का आज फैसला किया। राज्य का मानना है कि सीडब्ल्यूएमए उसके किसानों के हितों के खिलाफ हैं।

कर्नाटक के मुख्यमंत्री एच डी कुमारस्वामी द्वारा यहां बुलाई एक बैठक में सांसदों ने उच्चतम न्यायालय के आदेश का पालन करते हुए कावेरी प्राधिकरण के गठन पर केंद्र सरकार की अधिसूचना की वैधता को चुनौती देने की राज्य सरकार की योजना का समर्थन किया। कुमारस्वामी विभिन्न केंद्रीय मंत्रियों और कर्नाटक के सांसदों से मुलाकात करने के लिए राष्ट्रीय राजधानी में मौजूद हैं। राज्य के जल संसाधन मंत्री डी के शिवकुमार ने कहा कि उच्चतम न्यायालय के आदेश ने कर्नाटक के साथ अन्याय किया है।

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and documented at Bhagirath(English)& Publicity Section, CWC.

गंगा सफाई के दावों को लेकर एनजीटी उग्र

नई दिल्ली, (भाषा) : राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण (एनजीटी) ने गंगा नदी की साफ-सफाई पर आज असंतोष व्यक्त करते हुए कहा कि हालात असाधारण रूप से खराब हैं। नदी की सफाई के लिए शायद ही कोई प्रभावी कदम उठाया गया है। एनजीटी के अध्यक्ष न्यायमूर्ति ए के गोयल की अध्यक्षता वाली पीठ ने कहा कि अधिकारियों के दावों के बावजूद गंगा के पुनर्जीवन के लिए जमीनी स्तर पर किए गए काम पर्याप्त नहीं हैं और स्थिति में सुधार के लिए नियमित निगरानी की जरूरत है। हरित अधिकरण ने आदेश दिए कि गंगा में प्रदूषण के बारे में जमीनी स्तर पर लोगों की राय जानने के लिए सर्वेक्षण कराया जाए। संबंधित अधिकारियों को यह राय ई-मेल के जरिए भेजी जा सकती है। न्यायमूर्ति जवाद रहीम और आर. एस. राठौड़ की सदस्यता वाली पीठ ने कहा, "यह देश की सबसे प्रतिष्ठित नदी है जिसका सम्मान 100 करोड़ लोग करते हैं, लेकिन हम इसका संरक्षण नहीं कर पा रहे हैं। व्यवस्था को ज्यादा से ज्यादा ठोस और प्रभावी

कचरे पर हिमाचल सरकार को नोटिस

एनजीटी की प्रधान खंडपीठ ने हिमाचल प्रदेश के सोलन जिले की अश्वनी खड्ड में बहते प्लास्टिक और ठोस कचरे के वायरल हुये वीडियो का स्वतः संज्ञान लेते हुये इस सम्बंध में मामला दर्ज करने के साथ ही राज्य के प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड को नोटिस जारी किया है। एनजीटी के चेयरमैन न्यायमूर्ति आदर्श गोयल ने ट्रिब्यूनल के सदस्य एस.एस. गबरैल द्वारा भेजे गये वीडियो को देखने के बाद इस संबंध में आदेश जारी किए गए।

बनाने की जरूरत है।" एनजीटी ने गोमुख और उन्नाव के बीच गंगा नदी की सफाई के लिए केंद्र, उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार और उत्तराखंड सरकार की ओर से उठाए गए कदमों पर निपटारा रिपोर्ट दाखिल नहीं करने को लेकर राष्ट्रीय स्वच्छ गंगा मिशन की खिंचाई की थी।