

Editorial

Imphal, Monday, January 18, 2016

Sustainable action for progress

In an effort to keep up with the increasing pace of development and advancement in every sphere, our lives are being forced to conform and keep pace with these progressions. With this hastened pace of existence, an inevitable change is taking place - what is now being accepted as the "quick-fix" mantra or instant gratification - instant food, instant drink, instant relationships and instant solutions. Such changes, borne out of necessity rather than a fad, bring with it various radical changes that cater to the needs and conveniences, most remarkable being the spawning of a whole new sector of packaged foods and drinks that can be used in an instant. The increasing incidences of adulterated packaged foods and drinks being detected and reported, with the concerned Government officials seemingly waking up from their long slumber is a welcome and positive sign of the increasing awareness of the general public of the realities facing our society at present. The unanimous condemnations and protests, while understandable and desirable, could also spell a premature demise of a nascent industrial movement in the State. We should spare a moment to delve deeper into the actual trials and tribulations that a few of our pioneering people from the State are facing to bring about a revolution of sorts by fighting against almost insurmountable odds to turn their dreams into reality. Taking the untrodden path has always been fraught with dangers and uncertainties, especially in a State like ours where only negativity and pessimism thrives, not to mention the teeming parasites lurking in the shadows, waiting for any vulnerabilities and weaknesses of fellow beings to take advantage of. The Government should take proactive steps and help out these struggling start-ups to flourish and show the way to an industrialized society instead of taking a negative and punitive stand. It would be stating the obvious to mention the fact that the laws, measures, plans and steps of the Government at present is not conducive for the growth of industry - from investment and financing problems to the utter absence of support and encouragement which is vital for a sustainable and viable industrial atmosphere. Bottomline - the Government and the public should make constructive criticisms, suggestions and extend a helping hand to the struggling industrial pioneers of this State if we are to usher in an era of industrial growth and prosperity. And that can happen only when there is a sustainable, pragmatic and result-oriented plan backed by proactive performance from the Government which should replace the stop-gap measures being implemented at present.

Tejas makes history at Bahrain

PRO Defence
Imphal, Jan. 18: History has been created when Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas, indigenously designed and developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), touched the foreign soil at Sakhr Airbase, Bahrain. For the first time LCA Tejas flown in foreign airspace to participate in the Bahrain International Airshow-2016 during 21 to 23 January 2016. In addition to Tejas, DRDO is also showcasing other indigenously developed defence systems to display the nation's prowess in the area of advanced defence technologies with the aim of exploring the potential for export of defence systems and equipment.

Wanted Sub-Editor

Imphal Times is looking for an experience sub editor with excellent writing skill in English who can read Bengali written script. Working hour is 12 noon till 3 pm. Honorarium is Rs. 3000/p.m. Preference will be given to candidate who had already work in English daily as desk editor. Age no bar, and Imphal Times have no problem with those candidates working in other newspaper at night shift.

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Climate change impacts farm sector growth

By : Gargi Parsai
PIB Feature

The year 2015 was a challenging one for the agriculture sector. It was the second consecutive year of hardships for farmers owing to drought and inclement weather in several parts of the country highlighting the urgency to address issues of climate change. The concerns are carried forward in the coming year as currently rabi sowing of wheat is lower by 20.23 lakh hectares than last year, the prices of pulses and vegetables continue to rull high and towards sugarcane growers stand at Rs. 5406 crore. Southwest monsoon was 14 per cent below normal of the Long Period Average in 2015 on the back of 12 per cent deficiency in the previous year affecting the kharif crop. The northeast monsoon that followed played havoc in Tamil Nadu and adjoining region with unprecedented floods wiping out entire paddy and cash crops. While the production of pulses and oilseeds is perpetually short of demand for several years now, this time there are concerns about the output of cereals. Although the country is surplus in foodgrains as of now, experts point out that with a legal commitment to provide at least 62.5 million tonnes of subsidized foodgrains in the Targeted Public Distribution System under the National Food Security Act, farmers are keeping their fingers crossed for good weather conditions to achieve a good harvest. Sowing is still going on so hopes are high. At least nine states have declared drought-hit districts this year.

These are Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Jharkhand. Tamil Nadu, of course, has flood-hit districts. Parts of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh had been hit by drought during 2014-15 as well. The fourth advance estimates of foodgrains production in 2014-15 at 252.68 is 12.36 million tonnes lower than the output of 265.04 million tonnes in 2013-14. This is

due to a 6.91 million tonnes decline in the production of wheat. Rice too was slightly lower. Pulses output went down from 19.24 million tonnes to 17.20 million in tonnes in 2014-15 leading to the crisis of unprecedented price rise in these commodities. Tur prices, for instance, jumped up from Rs. 199 per kg and are still not under control. Not just tur and urad, major pulses are selling in the retail market at almost Rs. 140 per kilogram. Efforts to nail in hoarders and blackmarketeers did not yield the desired effect.

During the year the government raised the minimum support price of major pulses by Rs. 275 per quintal. Time and again the government has had to intervene in the market for onions and pulses this year. Even the prices of potato and tomatoes have ruled high this year not to talk of the regular vegetables and fruits. At the onset of the season peas were selling for as high as Rs 110 per kilogram.

To tide over the situation the government has set up a Price Stabilisation Fund with a corpus of Rs. 500 crore. Some of the funds were released this year for subsidised sale of pulses for states who came up with innovative schemes to provide pulses at affordable prices to Public Distribution System beneficiaries. With production estimates for 2015-16 still lower than the bumper crop of 2013-14, the government has decided to create a buffer stock of 1.5 lakh tonnes of tur and urad dals which will be procured directly from farmers at market rates.

To mitigate the suffering from drought, the government came up with several measures including taking 50 per cent of the damaged crop area into consideration rather than mere 33 per cent and raising the relief amount by 50 per cent. Reportedly Maharashtra's Marathwada region, which has been reeling under drought for last four years, saw the highest number of suicides by distressed farmers this year. The central government has given a drought relief of Rs. 3050 crore to the state, followed

by Rs. 2033 crore to Madhya Pradesh, Rs. 1540 crore to Karnataka and Rs. 1672 crore to Chhattisgarh. The money will be given from the National Disaster Relief Fund. Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh blamed states for tardy implementation of drought relief and delay in sending memoranda of demand which led to farmers' distress. "Implementation is in the hands of states," the Minister said. Lower rabi sowing this year has prompted the Agriculture Ministry to be ready with Contingency Plan and be prepared to move seeds and fertilizers to the affected region. Last year while the average deficiency in monsoon was 14 per cent, in Punjab and Haryana it was to the tune of 17 per cent. Although these states are irrigation, pre-harvest inclement weather hurt standing crop.

Seeking to address the issue of low productivity, the government has launched in a big way the scheme to issue Soil Health Cards. It proposes to cover 14.40 crore farmers in the next three years and has allocated Rs. 568.54 crore for the project. The card will enable a farmer to get assessed his/her far, soil for nutrient deficiency and fertilizer use. It will come with an advisory for the farmer on how much fertilizer etc. be applied in each crop.

With its focus on organic farming the government launched Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojna which encourages cluster farming. The subsidy for organic manure was raised to Rs. 300 from Rs. 100 per hectare.

About 60 per cent of India's agriculture is dependent on timely and adequate rain every year and recent droughts have only but emphasized the need for raising irrigation potential for farming. Towards this end the government last year launched the Prime Minister's Krishi Sinchai Yojna which is meant to ensure that more hectares are brought under irrigation. The budget allocation for this was about Rs.5300 crore which includes the funds for the Accelerated Integrated Benefit Programme. Agriculture Ministry says that about 1.55 lakh hectares

have been covered under drip and sprinkler project under this programme.

Crop insurance and raising the income of farmers has been a long standing demand. While the minimum support price of cereals, pulses and oilseeds were raised substantially during the year, an adequate Crop Insurance Scheme is still elusive. Replying to a debate in Parliament on Drought, Mr. Radha Mohan Singh announced that the government will soon come up with a crop insurance scheme that does not burden the farmer with high premiums and shall be more accurate in assessing crop damage.

Knowledge of markets and market intelligence is one area that can benefit farmers for getting remunerative price for its produce. To this extent the government moved towards setting up National Agriculture Market which will enable farmer to offer his produce to any market through e-marketing.

During the year the Ministry launched several mobile applications for farmers to empower them. Crop Insurance application will help farmers find out the insurance cover and the premium applicable to them. The "AgriMarket Mobile" enables a farmer to get the market prices of crops in the mandi within 50 km radius.

To get over the problems of lack of mobiles and lack of connectivity in hinterlands, the Agriculture Ministry has decided to make all its services available through mobile platforms. Over two crore farmers are registered with the Ministry for use of 'mKisan' portal for receiving SMS advisories on crops and weather.

However, there is no denying the fact that weather conditions hold the key for agricultural growth and prosperity, more so in the coming year when concerns about crop production, availability and prices will spill over. In 2015 while horticulture and fisheries sector growth decelerated due to continuously bad weather. (EOM). Gargi Parsai is a Senior Journalist based in Delhi.

National & International News

Govt to work for all round development of Northeast: PM

PII
New Delhi, Jan. 18: Ahead of his visit to the Northeast, Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said his government is working for all round development of the region and leaving no stone unturned. "I am eagerly awaiting my 2-day visit to the Northeast. Will

participate in various programmes in Sikkim & Assam and interact with citizens," he said. In a series of tweets, the Prime Minister said, "Our Govt is leaving no stone unturned to fulfil development aspirations of Northeast & ensure all round development. "Tomorrow I will be in Assam

where I will interact with the youth of Assam, students of IIT, NIT & central universities of the Northeast," he said. "A conference of State Agriculture Ministers is being held in Gangtok. Am particularly delighted that the conference is being held in Sikkim," Modi, who will also visit an exhibition of

organic products & interact with organic farmers in Gangtok, said. "I envision the Northeast to be a hub in this," he said. The Prime Minister said the Conference of Agriculture Ministers will focus on sustainable development, organic farming and ecotourism, "areas we are giving priority to".

Five security personnel dead in IED blast in Pakistan

ANI
Karachi, Jan 18: At least five security personnel have been killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Margut area in Pakistan's Quetta on Monday. According to The Dawn, two security personnel have been injured in the blast where forces' vehicle was targeted by a remotely-detonated device, rescue sources said. Balochistan, Pakistan's largest but least developed province, has remained under the grip of violence for over a decade which has claimed thousands of lives.

Rohith Vemula's hanging must force us to change campus politics

Agency
Hyderabad, Jan. 18: Rohith Vemula was a bright 26-year-old PhD student on the politically active and (recently) intensely controversial Hyderabad Central University (HCU) campus, who was among five students suspended by the administration and protesting against it. He had potential and a bright future ahead. Had. He might have been someone. Might have. Now, he is gone and the very politics that consumed him on one of India's best campuses, is back to make a spectacle and score brownie points, even as we are adeptly missing the most crucial point. He hanged himself in a

room of a friend, to whom he apologised in his final letter: His suspension meant that he was not allowed into the public areas, including the hostel; and was therefore camping in the open. **Simmering political confrontations** Trouble has been brewing on campus for over a year now — with the ABVP and Ambedkar Students Association (ASA) and Telangana SFI being in constant conflict. Events organised by Leftist students associations such as the Kiss of Love, BeeFest and a memorial for Yakub Menon after he was hanged and protests against increased police presence and intervention by police were opposed by the ABVP students.

Wallet Lost

I, the undersigned have lost my wallet containing my SBI ATM Card (2 no.), Axis Bank ATM Card (1 no.), HDFC ATM Card (1 no.), Punjab & Sind Bank (1 no.) Original Vehicle ID Card, Pan Card, Adhar Card, Driving License (2 no.) (Elvis and Krishna), Cash (SK), SBI Card (Credit) (2no.) and College ID Card (NIT Manipur) on the way between Nagamapal to Langol. Finders are requested to handover it to the undersigned. Sd/- Elvis Tourangbam Uripok Tourangbam Leikai Mobile no. 8259968799