

[ Big Loss ]

# Crops damaged in 30,000 acres

Niranjan Reddy says government will extend help to farmers affected by hailstorms

STATE BUREAU  
WANAPARTHY

Agriculture Minister S Niranjan Reddy said a primary estimate had revealed that crops in around 30,000 acres were damaged in Thursday's hailstorms. He said the State government would come to the rescue of farmers affected.

Addressing the media during his tour of several villages in Pangal and Pebbair mandals where he had inaugurated paddy procurement centres on Friday, he said the government was considering giving the affected farmers special input assistance, compensating them through disaster relief fund and determining their eligibility under the crop insurance scheme, contingent upon Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's decision on the matter.

He said farmers had grown crops in 50 lakh acres this yasangi across the State. Maize was cultivated in 6 lakh acres and fruit in 3 lakh acres apart from paddy which was cultivated on a large scale due to the timely input subsidies given by the State government and increased irrigation facility.

He suggested that farmers go for crops which have a shorter lifecycle to be on the safe side, pointing out that the increased irrigation facility had paved the way for achieving Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's dream of seeing crops cultivated in 1 crore acres across

## Crop loss being enumerated, says Harish

STATE BUREAU  
Siddipet

Finance Minister T Harish Rao examined the paddy crop damaged due to the hailstorm that lashed parts of Siddipet district on Friday.

Rao, who visited the paddy fields in Komuravelly, Kondapak and Nanganur mandals, said the State government would support all the farmers affected by the hailstorm.

The Minister, after examining the crop damage at Kistampet and Gorailpally villages of Komuravelly mandal and Dargha village of Kondapak mandal, said the crop was damaged in 920 acres in Komuravelly mandal of the total 6,143 acres.

However, he said 226 farmers had insured the crops while the rest 113 had not. Stating that agriculture, horticulture and revenue officials were enumerating the crop loss in the district, he said they would send the report to



REACHING OUT: Finance Minister T Harish Rao listens to a farmer whose paddy crop was damaged in Thursday's hailstorm, in Siddipet district.

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao who will decide on granting compensation to farmers. Later, the Minister also visited paddy fields in Timmaipally village of Nanganur mandal and interacted with farmers. Forest Development Corporation Chairman Van-

teru Prathap Reddy, DCCB Chairman Chitti Devendar Reddy, officials and other public representatives have accompanied the Minister.

Speaking to 'Telangana Today', Agriculture Officer Sravan Kumar said the paddy was damaged in

4,840 acres in the district during the last few days while the maize crop was damaged in 27 acres according to a primary estimate. He further said farmers had cultivated paddy in a record 1.5 lakh acres in Siddipet district this yasangi.

the State in another two years. During his day's tour, the Minister inaugurated PPCs at Davajipally, Gopulapur, Pangal and Jammapur villages in Pangal mandal, Srirangapur, Gummadam and Chelimitla in Pebbair mandal.

Later in the day, Niranjan Reddy in view of the coronavirus outbreak cautioned the administration of Wanaparthi and Jogulamba Gadwal districts to be alert as the two districts are located close to Kurnool district in Rayalaseema region and

people may cross the border. Reviewing the Covid-19 situation with MLAs, MPs, District Collectors and Superintendents of Police of the two districts at Pebbair Guesthouse on Friday evening, he instructed officials concerned on the pre-

cautions need to be taken paddy purchasing centres. He asked the officials to continue spraying sodium hypochlorite solution in all villages and to maintain sanitation and cleanliness to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

# Corona-hit corporates rush for legal advice

PS JAYARAM  
Hyderabad

Faced with the double whammy of an economic downtrend and the coronavirus-triggered nationwide lockdown, the corporate world is making a beeline for law firms across the country seeking legal advice on myriad issues.

The back-to-back crises have placed the business sector in an unprecedented situation, even as they struggle to keep afloat. On the one hand, they are faced with dwindling earnings and on the other, have to adopt humanitarian considerations while dealing with employees, not an easy proposition.

Manish Kumar Sharma, a Delhi-based corporate lawyer and partner in Singhania and Partners, a law firm, says: "Most of our clients are now seeking legal options and position on issues like imposing salary cuts, laying off part of the workforce and dealing with commercial rental lease agreements." Sharma, who says that they have at least a dozen clients approaching them on these issues since the lockdown, points out that it's a delicate and unprecedented situation that they are faced with.

"It's a tough call and we walk a very thin line. While we lay out the legal position to our corporate clients, we also advise them to be sensitive given the fact that the entire world is faced with a unique situation," he said. He says the advisory from



Manish Kumar Sharma

the Government of India on salary payments under the Disaster Management Act clearly overrides all other laws. "The advisory is binding on all and has an overriding effect on all other legislations." "In the case of employees in companies dealing with non-essential services, managements are bound to pay full salaries to them under the advisory. In situations where the companies are facing major financial issues, we advise the managements to make adjustments against the leave entitlements of employees. We suggest them that deduction in salaries should be the last resort," Sharma says, adding that it is for the companies, however, to take a call on percentage of salary cuts based on ground realities. "After all, they also need to run the companies while being compassionate towards their staff," he said.

However, when it comes to employees of companies dealing in essential services, Sharma says such companies have to take permission from the government for the number of employees that can be called to work. "The remaining staff not working

will also have to be paid salaries, but if someone is asked to work and he doesn't report for duty, then his/her salary can be deducted," the lawyer said.

On the issue of commercial leases, he says there are grey areas in such lease agreements essentially because it is an unprecedented situation and are not factored into the lease agreements. "They have to pay the rent but both parties have to be understanding in such a situation. We can't find fault with either side," he said.

Abhishek Patwari, a Hyderabad-based lawyer, points out that future rental agreements are bound to change given the present experience. "There is no 'Act of God' clause presently in most rental lease agreements, simply because nobody expected something like a coronavirus would happen and then its ramifications," he said.

Another lawyer from Kochi, who requested anonymity, said several traders and merchants associations had been approaching him for PIL to be filed seeking directions from courts of law for reduction in rents. "We are dissuading the parties from doing so to prevent a cascading effect on landlords and further down the chain. These are unprecedented times with unknown ramifications," he said, adding that if such a situation is handled irresponsibly, it might cause more harm than ensuring success for the affected parties.

# Donations continue to flood CMRF

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

The Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) has donated Rs 5 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) on Friday. Jio Telangana CEO KC Reddy and Kamal Potlapalli, Corporate Affairs, RIL, called on the MA&UD Minister KT Rama Rao and handed over the cheque.

My Home Group chairman Jupally Rameshwar Rao donated Rs 3 crore to the CMRF and the Group directors Jupally Rama Rao and Jupally Shyam Rao handed over the cheque to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao at Pragathi Bhavan here on Friday. Gangavaram Port Chairman DVS Raju also handed over a cheque for Rs 1 crore to the Chief Minister.

Separately, over 161 members of Ameerpet and SR Nagar Hostels Associations and Welfare Associations under the leadership of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Minister Talasani Srinivas Yadav handed over



My Home Group directors Jupally Rama Rao and Jupally Shyam Rao handing over a cheque for Rs 3 crore to Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao. (Below) Jio Telangana CEO KC Reddy and Kamal Potlapalli, Corporate Affairs, RIL, with KT Rama Rao after donating Rs 5 crore.

a cheque for Rs 45 lakh to KT Rama Rao, while representatives of Telangana

Chamber of Commerce and Industry donated Rs 42 lakh. MLA Kale Yadaiah and 18

others from Chevella constituency handed over cheques for Rs 30.80 lakh, followed by Sumadhura Infra (Rs 25 lakh), president of Telangana Petroleum Dealers Association Amarendra Reddy (Rs 25 lakh), Works Engineers Pvt Ltd (Rs 25 lakh), Vasavi Real Estates (Rs 25 lakh), Deepikshita Mahila Club (Rs 21 lakh), Virupaksha Organic Private Ltd (Rs 15 lakh), Vermont Developers (Rs 11 lakh), Srico Project Pvt Ltd CMD Srinivasa Rao (Rs 10 lakh).

Members of Telangana Recognized Schools Management Association under the leadership of Minister Gangula Kamalakar donated Rs 10 lakh.

Quality Circle Forum of India (Rs 10 lakh), Janapriya Engineers Syndicate (Rs 10 lakh), Nakshatra IT Services Ltd (Rs 10 lakh), Chinmaya Seva Trust (Rs 10 lakh), Sri Venkateswara Cine Creations (Rs 10 lakh) and former MP Bura Narsaiah Goud (Rs 10 lakh) were among the others who contributed to the CMRF.

## ART FOR A CAUSE



An artist draws a painting on the Narsampeta road in Warangal Rural to create awareness on coronavirus and social distancing.

# Telangana launches fruit campaign

STATE BUREAU  
Hyderabad

Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has always stressed the adoption of a multi-pronged strategy to control the spread of coronavirus. On a number of occasions, he has highlighted the need to have a relook at our dietary habits and make fruits an essential part of our diet.

Based on the Chief Minister's directions and inputs from National Institute of Nutrition and senior biotech scientists, the Departments of Agriculture, Horticulture and Marketing have launched a "Fruits on Friday and Saturday" Campaign.

The fruits cultivated in Telangana like musambi, 85 per cent of which is exported, and mango are rich in Vitamin C. Fruits rich in Vitamin C boosts immunity which is considered as one

of the criteria in reducing the impact of corona. The campaign includes sending fruits in considerable quantities along with Mobile Rythu Bazaars, media campaign to promote fruit diet, sending exclusive mobile fruit vehicles to resident welfare associations and gated communities.

The measure to supply fruits to the "Containment Clusters" in Hyderabad and in Telangana is under consideration by the Agriculture Department.

This will also ensure that the farmers have a ready market and the people of Telangana will have affordable and immune promoting mausambi, tomato and mango right at their doorsteps.

Slogan of "Pandlu Tinandi, Corona nu Tarimi Kottandi" could benefit both the farmers and the citizens, the department said in a statement.

# Lockdown poses marketing challenge for mango growers

STATE BUREAU  
Wanaparthi/Nagarkurnool

The lockdown following the outbreak of Covid-19 posed a marketing challenge for mango growers across Palamuru and also Telangana.

To make matters worse, hailstorms and strong winds caused large-scale damage to mango growers in parts of Wanaparthi district. Rains just before Sankranti during inflorescence led to a condition called 'blossom blight' in mango crop across Pangal, Kodair and Kollapur mandals. As a result, the yield has been low. The produce, which may head to the Hyderabad (Chaitanyapuri) market, could see price falling given a sudden spike in supply and low demand due to the lockdown.

Naresh, a lessee of mango orchard at Narsaipally of Kodair in Nagarkurnool district, has taken a biennial lease of around 540 trees of different mango varieties. Of the total lease amount of Rs 9,50,000, he paid some.

Though he reaped high returns last year, he is uncertain about the business this year due to the lockdown.

"A good yield would mean around 20-tonne harvest for 540 trees of my farm, but this year, it looks like I can get only 5 or 6 tonnes because of poor flowering due to 'buda thegulu'. Even the rate per tonne of mango is ranging between Rs 30,000-50,000," he told *Telangana Today*.

Traders from other States coming to the Hyderabad market to make purchases have stopped coming due to the lockdown.

Permissions are given by the district administration to mango growers to sell their produce in Hyderabad, but there is a deadline of 11.30 am, before which farmers have to load, travel, unload, sell and leave the market, which has become a hurdle for farmers to sell mangoes.

"At the markets, traders have formed a ring and the price they quote will be final. It is like take it or leave it. Besides, we are expected to



Farmers feel selling mangoes locally will not be a profitable option.

pay an 11% commission for the produce we sell, give away quintal mangoes per tonne to them and also pay rent of about Rs 3,000 for the space they allot to us in the market," Naresh added.

Some experts have been suggesting staggered harvesting, that is not harvesting the entire crop at once, but plucking and selling only ripened fruits in different phases. Shankara Swamy, Asst Professor, Fruit Science, SKLBHU, suggests that the farmers need to go

local and try to form a network of vendors in rural areas and bring them together through WhatsApp groups. As per the orders, they should harvest and supply. He also suggests using ripening methods such as dipping fruits in ethanol solution, drying them and packing them or placing unripe sachets in packed boxes which are accepted as per the food regulation standards, instead of using Calcium Carbide, which contains cancer-causing agents.

However, the reality on the ground is different. Mango growers have become restless because of the hailstorms and strong winds, which could cause great damage to the yield. Hence, staggered harvesting is something they have not preferred, as weather conditions are uncertain.

Even selling locally doesn't seem to be a profitable option, as farmers say that by doing that, they may be able to sell a tonne load at the maximum. In the absence of a marketing system to support the farmers this year, middlemen may make merry and this would cost consumers more. Kollapur mangoes are famous across the country and elsewhere because of the high degree of sweetness in them. However, due to absence of cold storage, processing units or any major market in the Assembly constituency for all these decades, the area's mango growers could not effectively brand and market themselves. "I have spoken

to the market officials in Chaitanyapuri, but they say they may be getting 100 tonnes of mangoes every day, which is too much in these times when the demand is low. Corporates like Reliance and More are also not showing much interest," Kollapur MLA B Harsha Vardhan Reddy told *Telangana Today*.

"We submitted proposals for mango markets and fruit processing units which would be set up as MSMEs in Kollapur. The government is also showing an inclination towards our proposals, but the lockdown has put all our plans on hold," he said.

Some farmers from the region are suggesting that the Centre set up procurement centres in different locations and buy mangoes from farmers and deliver them along with other commodities to doorsteps of the people during the lockdown by using funds from NDRF. They say mangoes are rich in anti-oxidants.