

Goa's State Regional Plan suffers a setback

Special Correspondent

PANAJI: The Goa government's ongoing project of formulating a comprehensive State Regional Plan (RP) 2021, a land-use-plan with the help of experts and stakeholders, has received a setback with the resignation of the former town planner from Delhi, Edgar Rebeiro, who headed its Task Force.

Mr. Rebeiro, who is also the adviser to the Chief Minister on town planning matters, on Thursday submitted his resignation from the State-level steering committee formed to finalise the RP 2021 after expressing his displeasure over non-implementation of his recommendations.

The Task Force was formed to formulate the plan after a public agitation compelled the erstwhile Congress government to scrap a controversial State Regional Plan 2011 which had been formulated with complete disregard to environmental and ecolog-

• **Task Force's suggestions were never incorporated**

• **A prominent village panchayat left out of planning process**

ical aspects of the coastal State.

The government's amendments to the State Town and Country Planning Act, rushed through while the process of formulating RP was under way, to empower the government to decide on projects in the public interest had ruffled the feathers of members of the Task force, including some stakeholders like non-governmental organisations.

Mr. Rebeiro stated in his resignation letter that the proposed RP was seriously dented because some of the suggestions put forward by the Task Force were never incorporated.

A draft regional plan 2021, which was formulated under

the Task Force, is being discussed at various levels of local self government bodies.

Mr. Rebeiro has also stated that his major recommendations — freezing major development by halting big constructions till the draft RP was finalised and all public-private-partnership projects be brought under the ambit of the RP — were never considered.

When contacted on Friday by *The Hindu*, Mr. Rebeiro confirmed that he had made a demand for bringing the whole of Goa under the RP as he found that a major chunk of land which came under five municipalities and a prominent village panchayat was left out of the planning process. It would amount to denying the right of some people to participate in the development process.

Chief Minister Digambar Kamat said on Friday that he had spoken to Mr. Rebeiro and was confident that the issues would be sorted out.

किसानों को कूपन के जरिए सीधे मिलेगी खाद सब्सिडी

नई दिल्ली, भाषा : सरकार भारी-भरकम उर्वरक सब्सिडी की रकम सीधे किसानों तक पहुंचाने के लिए नई खाद नीति लाने जा रही है। इसके लिए वह 'कूपन व टैग' प्रणाली अपनाएगी। केंद्र द्वारा दी जाने

वाली इस सहायता के बड़े पैमाने पर दुरुपयोग को देखते हुए यह प्रस्ताव तैयार किया गया है। फिलहाल खाद सब्सिडी फर्टिलाइजर कंपनियों को दी जाती है और वे कम कीमत पर किसानों को उर्वरक उपलब्ध कराती हैं। वित्त वर्ष 2008-09 में सरकार का खाद सब्सिडी बिल करीब एक लाख 17 हजार करोड़ रुपये था।

सरकार की इस नई प्रणाली में जिला प्रकोष्ठ बार कोडेड नगद कूपन देगा। इसमें किसान, उसकी उर्वरकों की जरूरत

◆ सब्सिडी के दुरुपयोग को रोकने के लिए सरकार का प्रस्ताव

और सब्सिडी की राशि जैसी जानकारियां अंकित होंगी। यह प्रिंटेड कूपन किसानों को नजदीकी बैंक शाखाओं के जरिए मिलेगा। अधिकारियों का कहना है कि खाद की हर बोरी पर बार कोडेड टैग लगा

होगा। ये टैग जिला या फैक्टरी आउटलेट स्तर पर प्रिंट कर चिपकाए जा सकते हैं। किसान कूपन लेकर खाद डीलर के पास जाएगा। वह कूपन लेकर किसान की पसंद की खाद उसे देगा। साथ ही डीलर खाद की बोरी से टैग निकालकर कूपन पर चिपका देगा। इसके बाद डीलर टैग लगे कूपन संबंधित बैंक को देगा। बैंक में किसानों को दी जाने वाली सब्सिडी की वास्तविक राशि और उसे मिली खाद की मात्रा जांचने के लिए इन कूपनों की स्कैनिंग की जाएगी।

Social forestry scheme launched in HP

PC Lohumi ■ Shimla

With a view to increase the green cover and make Himachal 'carbon neutral' by reducing emission of greenhouse gases, the State Forest department has launched a new scheme 'Sanjha Van-Sanjeevani Van' to ensure more public participation in afforestation programmes.

The scheme envisages planting of saplings of medicinal and herbal plants by each household and ensuring its survival by actively involving the community, social, cultural and religious organisations, panchayats, local bodies and NGOs.

The Forest department has already started distribution of medicinal and herbal plants and selected species of plants which will provide fodder and fuel and also absorb carbon and other greenhouse gases.

Alarmed at the depletion of green cover, especially in thickly populated urban and rural areas, the Government launched the novel scheme to motivate and encourage people to plant medicinal and herbal plants to expand and revive the green cover and also attract the attention of people over rapid environmental degradation, threatening the eco-system of fragile hills.

First Chief Minister YS Parmar had launched the 'Three dimensional forest farming' programme in early 70s to expand the green cover and also met the requirements of fuel, food and fodder. Active people's participation was a key component of this programme which did not receive the desired support from the people and the forest mafia which became active in the State during the same time, took heavy toll on forests.

The illicit felling of trees became

an environmental, social, economical and political issue in the State and former Chief Minister Ram Lal had to quit in the wake of allegations that his Government was protecting the forest mafia. Later, the Government imposed a blanket ban on green felling and poaching and successive Governments were under tremendous public pressure to protect the forests.

Himachal has forest wealth valued about Rs 1 lakh crore and it was protecting the forests by depriving the State of huge revenue. Since the flora of the State consists of around 3,500 species of plants out of which about 800 are rich in medicinal value whereas 165 species are exploited for commercial purposes. The State is the largest supplier of *chilgoza*, *kuth*, *dioscoria*, *dhoop*, *picrorrhiza*, *valeriana* and *ephedra* in the country.

Over one crore medicinal plants will be planted with the help of 525 Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) under the new scheme. These committees would plant herbal plants on 2,500 hectares of area under different afforestation components in the State during the current financial year and on maturity, 75 per cent of the income generated from these plants would go to forest management committee while the remaining 25 per cent would be retained by the concerned panchayat.

To make this programme a success, the State Forest Development Corporation would assist JFMCs for developing skills for handling, processing and marketing medicinal plants. The State Medicinal Plant Board has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Patanjali Yog Peeth in Haridwar for marketing of medicinal plants and herbs.

Weak monsoon hits groundnut farming

By **S.P.S. Pannu**
in New Delhi

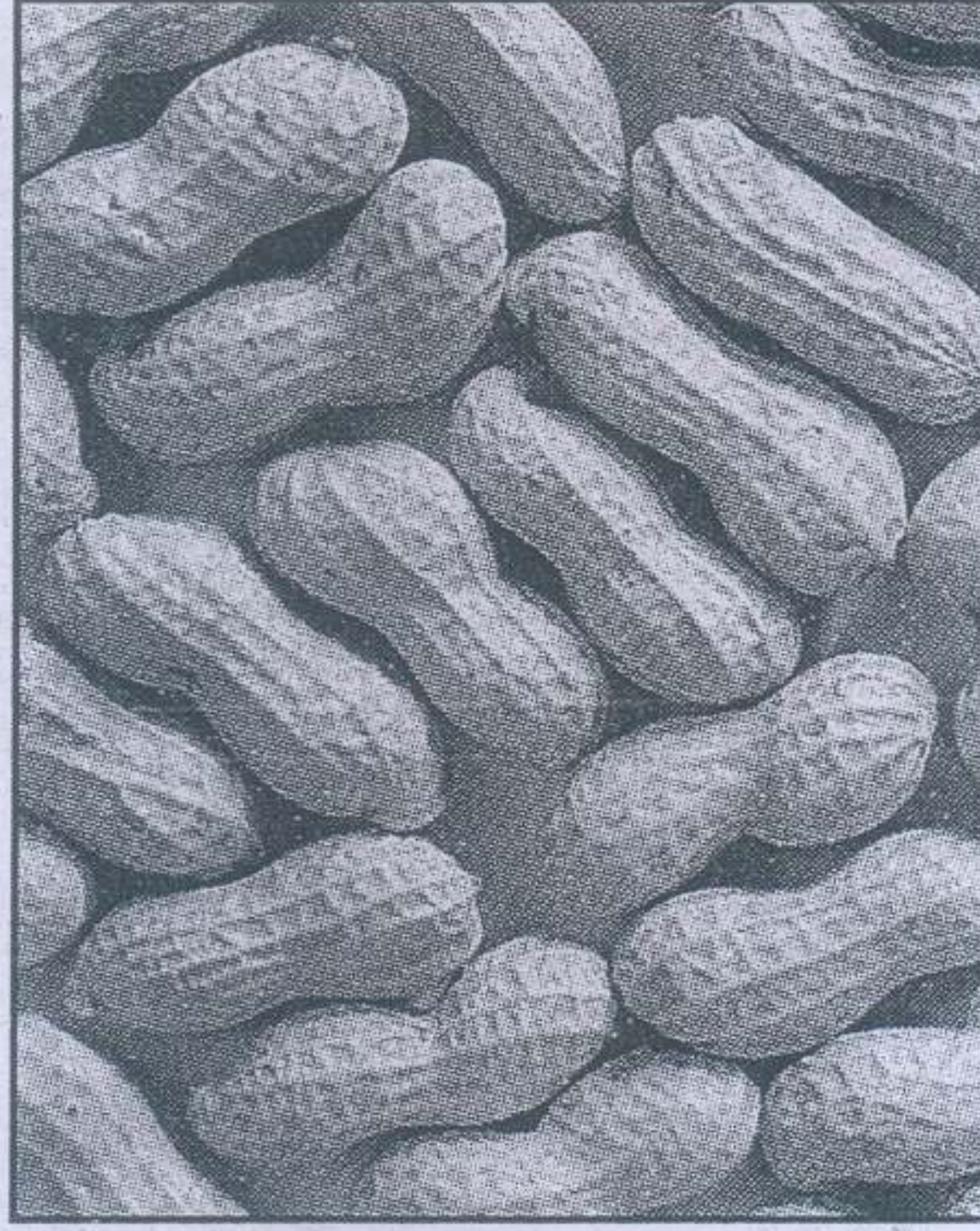
THERE has been a sharp decline in the acreage under groundnut cultivation due to the weak monsoon, which is bound to lead to an increase in edible oil prices and higher quantum of imports.

According to the latest figures compiled by the ministry of agriculture, the area under groundnut cultivation has come down by as much as 22 per cent to 35.7 lakh hectares in the current kharif season from 45.5 lakh hectares last year.

Over 40 per cent of the country's requirement of edible oils is met through imports and this proportion is expected to go up due to the reduction in the area under groundnut cultivation this year.

Edible oil imports had jumped by over 45 per cent to a whopping Rs 15,873.6 crore for the financial year ended March 31, 2009 from Rs 10,942.54 crore in 2007-08. This is expected to shoot up further during the current year.

Since India buys edible oils in large quantities, given the



The area under groundnut cultivation has come down by as much as 22%

size of its population, the prices in the international market shoot up each time the country decides to import. The fact that the rupee has depreciated further will only make these imports costlier and further accentuate inflationary pressures.

China and India are the largest producers of groundnut in the world and also the largest consumers.

According to commodity expert Mehul Agarwal, groundnut is also exported to Europe and America but has recently lost ground as the soyabean

lobby has been highlighting the fact that it contains toxic elements harmful to humans.

He is of the view that this could also be one of the reasons for the reduced area under the crop and

Imports meet over 40% of India's edible oil need

an increase in the area under soyabean.

However, the acreage under soyabean, which also requires less water than groundnut, has gone up by around two lakh

tonnes and cannot compensate for the loss in acreage under groundnut.

There has been some increase in the area under cultivation of pulses as prices are ruling high and they also require less water to grow.

Oilseeds are a weak link in Indian agriculture and have forced the country to go in for heavy imports of edible oils, which the country can ill-afford at a time when exports have slowed down and the trade deficit has widened.

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