

Kenya to import farmers from India



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Delhi - In what may be an extraordinary sign of things to come, the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh is planning to export its drought-hit farmers to Africa. The state government is planning to lease 28 300ha in Kenya and Uganda for Indian farmers to cultivate.

The scheme is likely to be controversial. Memories of Idi Amin's forced expulsion of more than 70 000 Asians from Uganda in 1972 are still raw, and recent years have seen tensions between Kenya's African and Asian communities.

Nevertheless, under the Andhra Pradesh government's plan, the first 500 farmers will leave for Kenya and Uganda in June next year. The fear is that they will be seen as modern-day colonisers from an India that is growing in economic strength.

But, if India's economy is booming sufficiently for a state government to be able to buy up tens of thousands of hectares of cultivable land in Africa, the farmers of Andhra Pradesh have seen little of the plenty.

Andhra Pradesh has been one of the powerhouses of India's economic transformation. Part of the city of Hyderabad has been renamed Cyberabad because of the number of international IT firms relocating there.

In the rural areas outside the city, though, there is a different story. Like most of India, Andhra Pradesh has suffered a series of devastating droughts in recent years, which have crippled the farming industry.

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