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Low yield hits cashew farmers

Ravi. P. Benjamin

The Department of Horticulture is mulling over the idea of giving relief to cashew farmers whose crop has been damaged due to erratic rainfall and tea mosquito disease which resulted in a steep fall in cashew production, by extending insurance cover to them.

A survey is being undertaken by the department to assess the damage caused to the crop in north Andhra districts. More than 60,000 farmers cultivating cashew on nearly 1 lakh hectares in the region are in distress due to a massive drop in crop yield. A pall of gloom descended on the farmers who mostly are small and marginal farmers having land holdings of two or three hectares. Hundreds of them are pressing the panic button due to an all-time low yield.

Local seed

Horticulture Officer G. Radhika has told *The Hindu* that about 30 species of insects infest cashew and out of these tea mosquito, flower thrips, stem and root borer and fruit and nut borer cause 30 per cent loss in yield. Rise in night temperatures and dew fall result in cashew flower drop. Another reason for the fall in production is the use of local seed by farmers instead of the recommended high quality cashew grafts supplied by the horticulture nursery. The Bapatla variety of grafts and the Vengurla variety procured from Maharashtra are of superior quality which produce 20 kg of cashew per tree whereas the local variety seed produces a mere 3 or 4 kg per tree.

The Bapatla and Vengurla varieties are of course expensive as they sell at Rs. 20 per graft.

Additional Director of Horticulture G. Prabhakar Rao says that the department is supplying grafts to farmers at 50 per cent subsidy under the Cashew Area Expansion Scheme.

The farmers will have to spend only Rs.10 per graft. Every farmer is also given fertilizers worth Rs.3,000. Under the scheme, cost of maintenance is given to the farmers who follow the norms and ensure plant survival rate of 75 to 90 percent in the second and third years. Farmers are

being asked to plant 80 grafts per acre instead of the traditional planting of 50 to 60 per acre, for boosting cashew production.

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Singapore meet to boost cashew exports

Staff Reporter

As part of its export promotion activities for the current year, the Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI) organised a buyer-seller meet between Indian cashew exporters and international buyers on May 21 in Singapore.

The meet was sponsored by the Union Ministry of Commerce under its market development assistance programme for 2012-2013.

A statement from the CEPCI here on Thursday said that it was the first time that the council was organising a buyer-seller meet outside the country. To ensure maximum participation of buyers around the world, the meet was held immediately after the conclusion of the International Nut and Dried Fruit Foundation Congress held in Singapore from May 18 to 20.

CEPCI Chairman Hari Krishnan R. Nair led the meet. Nineteen international buyers from nine countries and 22 cashew exporters from India attended. Amitesh Bharat Singh, First Secretary of the High Commission of India in Singapore, and representatives of the Singapore Indian Chamber of Commerce also participated.

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Most fruits on sale artificially ripened

K.P.M. Basheer

When the Kochi city shadow police seized nearly a tonne of mangoes from a wholesale fruit vendor and arrested him for using a hazardous chemical for artificially ripening them, they were just acknowledging a practice that has been going for years.

They were also acknowledging the fact that a sizeable number of Keralites have been eating poison-laced fruits for years. Using the chemical compound calcium carbide (CaC_2) for artificially ripening fruits brought in from other States is so commonplace that, vendors say, you can hardly find a fruit free from it.

A large chunk of the fruits consumed in Kerala is brought in from Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. For the convenience of transportation, handling and longer shelf life, they are brought in unripe and later the artificial ripening agent is applied.

“We are aware that the fruits we sell are ripened with a chemical,” a wayside fruit-vendor in the city told *The Hindu*. “I don't know anything about its health risks, but it is very useful for us vendors — it increases the shelf life of the fruits and makes the fruits attractive to the buyers.” He said that the wholesale vendor from whom he purchased the fruits used to keep a tiny cloth bag of the cheap chemical in each of the crate of fruits. Just 1 kg of calcium carbide is enough to ripen some 15 crates of fruits, he said.

“The chemical helps the fruits ripen evenly and give a smooth look to the fruits,” he said. A whole range of fruits — from mangoes, grapes, bananas, water melons, pomegranates to guava — were being ripened using CaC_2 .

But, the convenience and profits of the vendors come at an enormous health cost to the consumers. Eating fruits ripened by calcium carbide can hurt the digestive system and the liver. It can also cause dizziness, headache and mental disorientation in the short term.

DHARWAD, June 8, 2012

Issue title deeds to farmers cultivating bagair hukum land, demands KPRS

The Dharwad district committee of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha (KPRS) has urged the State government to start the process of issuing title deeds to farmers cultivating bagair hukum land.

Farmers took out a rally here on Thursday and staged a dharna outside the office of the Deputy Commissioner.

In a memorandum addressed to Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda, they urged the government to issue the deeds and ensure the safety of bagair hukum land tillers facing threats from the “land mafia”.

According to them, “vested interests” had been trying to evict farmers from the bagair hukum land they were cultivating at Madanbhavi, Kallur, Kallapur, Hosavalu and Durgadakere villages of the district.

KPRS would oppose the move to amend the Karnataka Land Reforms Act 1961. The amended Act would allow “capitalist forces” to gain control over land and natural resources, the memorandum said.

Industries

It also opposed the Global Investors Meet that began in Bangalore on Thursday. The sangha was not opposed to industrial development, but was against the acquisition of agrarian land for industrial use, it said. When agricultural land was acquired for industrial purposes, the government should ensure that farmers were offered maximum compensation and received a share of profits of the industry, it added.

KRPS leaders B.S. Soppin and B.I. Iliger, Mahesh Pattar and R.H. Ayi of CITU, and Maruti Ambiger and Vinayak Kurubar of SFI were present.

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- *Government urged to ensure safety of those cultivating such land*
 - *KPRS expresses opposition to Global Investors Meet*
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Published: June 8, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: June 8, 2012 05:27 IST

Pechipparai dam opened for irrigation

Staff Reporter

The Collector-in-charge, S. Palanisamy released water from Pechipparai dam for irrigation purpose by opening the sluices on Thursday.

Later, he said that as demanded by the farmers during the farmers' grievance day meeting held here recently, the Chief Minister, Jayalithaa had directed the district administration to release water from Pechipparai, Perunchani, Chittar I and Chittar II dams on Thursday for irrigation purpose in the first crop ie Kumbapoo season.

Before the release of water, special pujas were performed at the Pechiyamma temple, situated in front of the Pechipparai dam and the officials as well as the representatives of the farmers' associations' threw flowers in the dam to mark the release . Around 200 cusecs of water was released from the dam.

The farmers in the district can now raise paddy crops on over 79,000 acres of land and farmers from Radhapuram taluk in Tirunelveli district can raise paddy crops on over 19,000 acres of land with the release of the water.

However, heavy rain lashed various parts of the district particularly in the catchment area thus bringing cheers to the farming community.

hindustantimes

Friday, June 08, 2012

Press Trust Of India

New Delhi, June 07, 2012

First Published: 19:38 IST(7/6/2012)

Last Updated: 19:40 IST(7/6/2012)

Low interest rate to boost economy: FinMin

Pitching for cut in interest rates by the RBI in its forthcoming monetary review, the finance ministry today said low interest rate regime would push growth rate, which slipped to nine-year low of 6.5% in 2011-12.

"We see a possibility of growth picking up, if interest rates are reasonable," department of economic affairs secretary R Gopalan told reporters when asked about government's views on the interest rate scenario.

He said the Reserve Bank would take into account the inflationary situation and external factors while deciding on the interest rate stance in its policy review on June 18.

While the wholesale price (WPI) inflation in April was 7.23%, consumer price inflation based on retail prices was 10.36%.

Gopalan said the growth prospects of the economy are improving on the back of falling crude oil prices and gold imports. These two factors would help bring down current account deficit (CAD). Besides, savings rate in the January-March quarter has shown improvement.

After growing at 8.4% in two consecutive fiscals, the economic growth rate fell to 6.5% in 2011-12 mainly on the back of lower manufacturing sector output.

The government expects the economy to grow at 7.6% in the current fiscal.

Gopalan said the government has to address issues of fiscal deficit and CAD for economic growth.

"The government has to address deficit issues if it wants growth to take place. So fiscal deficit has to be kept at 5.1% in this fiscal," he added.

The fiscal deficit was 5.76% of the GDP in 2011-12, while the CAD is estimated at around 4%.

On Rupee, the secretary said, the nervousness in the eurozone and the crude oil prices had resulted in lowering of the value of the domestic currency.

The Rupee has declined over 20% since January. The Rupee was trading at around 55 against a dollar in today's market.

"I feel the external situation may not deteriorate and with the kind of steps we take, we are seeing that the Rupee will not remain at this level," he hoped.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/867493.aspx>

First Published: 13:59 IST(7/6/2012)

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Monsoon arrives late, starts weak

India's monsoon rainfall was 36% below average in the week to June 6, the weather office said on Thursday, after the seasonal rains missed their usual arrival date of June 1 in south India. The rains are crucial for farm output and economic growth as about 55% of the south Asian nation's arable land is rain-fed, and the farm sector makes up about 15% of a nearly \$2-trillion economy that is Asia's third-biggest.

"Farmers have started sowing rice, pulses and cotton in some areas and production prospects are still good as the monsoon is expected to be normal," said AK Singh, deputy director-general of the state-run Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

Crops are not greatly affected by the volume of rain in the initial stages of the four-month long rainy season, but the distribution of rainfall in mid-July, after the monsoon has covered the entire country, is critical for their growth.

"Rainfall activities have improved over the west coast and northeast region," said a senior official of the India Meteorological Department (IMD), who asked not to be identified.

The monsoon hit Kerala on Tuesday, four days after its usual arrival date, as a cyclone on the west coast had stalled the onset of the rains.

Rains in some west coast areas

India's weather office had predicted a June 1 start for the rains, with a four-day margin of error.

Its forecast of average rainfall for the whole season, which runs from June to September, would make this year the third in a row to escape a drought.

Weather officials said the rains had arrived in west coast areas where cane, tea, coffee, rubber and cotton are grown, while growing areas in eastern India still await rain to speed up rice planting.

"We expect rains to cover more parts of south and eastern India next week," the weather official said.

The monsoon rains enter the soybean areas of central India after the second week of June, by which point half of the country is being covered by the rains.

The IMD is expected to release its outlook for the rest of the monsoon during the third week of June. Weekly bulletins on rainfall continue during the season.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/867300.aspx>

water

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Friday, Jun 8






Tomorrow's Forecast



Saturday, Jun 9

Partly Cloudy	Max	Min	Rainy	Max	Min
	41.3°	29.8°		37°	28°
Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs	Sunrise: 6:35				
Humidity: 70%	Sunset: 18:03				
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1002				

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Jun 10	Monday Jun 11	Tuesday Jun 12	Wednesday Jun 13	Thursday Jun 14
				
37° 29°	36° 30°	34° 29°	34° 28°	34° 29°
Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy	Rainy

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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

8 JUN, 2012, 09.51AM IST, REUTERS

CBOT soybeans to surge more to \$14.38

SINGAPORE: CBOT soybeans July contract will surge more to \$14.38 per bushel as it has broken resistance at \$14.15.

Resistance sits on the 50 percent Fibonacci retracement on a fall from \$15.12-1/2 to \$13.17-1/2, and the break has opened the way towards the 61.8 percent level at \$14.38.

A further retracement from the current level will be limited to a support at \$14.02.

Wang Tao is a Reuters market analyst for commodities and energy technicals. The views expressed are his own.

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8 JUN, 2012, 09.39AM IST, REUTERS

Wheat drops 1.2%, corn down on US stimulus uncertainty

SINGAPORE: Chicago wheat slid 1.2 percent on Friday, while corn fell around 1 percent, weighed down by economic uncertainty as Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke gave no clues on whether a U.S. easing was in the offer.

Soybeans also lost nearly 1 percent, tracking a broad-based decline in the global markets, but the oilseed is on track for its biggest weekly gain since October, supported by tight supplies and strong demand from China.

Commodities, including oil and metals, fell, as the markets were hurt by disappointment that Bernanke gave no clues on whether a U.S. easing was a possibility, outweighing any positive effect from China rate cuts.

"Fundamentals are quite supportive for oilseeds but I think the global economic situation is more important so it is more of repositioning by hedge funds," said Andrew Woodhouse, a Sydney-based analyst at Advance Trading Australasia.

"I think the oilseed complex is a lot tighter than the wheat complex from the balance sheet point of view. Corn is the same story as its balance sheet is very tight and dry weather is not conducive for the crop."

Chicago Board of Trade July corn fell 1.1 percent to \$5.87-1/2 a bushel by 0313 GMT, July soybeans lost 0.9 percent to \$14.15 a bushel and wheat gave up 1.2 percent to \$6.34 a bushel.

For the week, soybeans are up more than 5 percent, the biggest weekly rise since mid-October, corn has gained 6.6 percent after two weeks of decline and wheat is up 3.5 percent following almost 10 percent slide last week.

Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said on Thursday the U.S. central bank was ready to

shield the economy if financial troubles mount but offered few hints that further monetary stimulus was imminent.

The dollar index, which measures the strength of the greenback against a basket of currencies, rose 0.5 percent, making dollar-priced commodities expensive for importers.

On Thursday, corn and soybeans climbed to a two-week high as China cut interest rates and hot weather threatened to reduce yields in the United States.

China delivered twin surprises on interest rates, cutting both borrowing costs, giving banks additional flexibility to set competitive lending, and deposit rates, in a step along the path of liberalization.

Scattered showers are expected in the U.S. Midwest corn and soybean growing area over the next couple of weeks but the rains will miss a large portion of the crop belt, according to agricultural meteorologists.

There is a 50 percent chance the feared El Nino weather pattern which can trigger droughts in Southeast Asia and Australia and floods in South America may strike later this year, the U.S. Climate Prediction Center warned.

Hot and dry weather in the United States could take the edge off what the U.S. Department of Agriculture forecasts to be a record-large corn crop.

Analysts polled by Reuters predicted the USDA would cut the winter wheat harvest by 3.2 percent in a closely watched supply-and-demand report due next Tuesday, the first such report to be released during the new 21-hour trading schedule at the CBOT.

8 JUN, 2012, 06.08AM IST, TAPASH TALUKDAR,ET BUREAU

Farmers across India bet on guar as prices see a sharp rise

MUMBAI: Aklam Raju, a 37-year-old new-generation farmer near Agali in Andhra Pradesh's Anantapur district, has sown his maiden guar crop this year after the beans yielded a five-fold jump in returns over last year. Guar is mainly grown in Rajasthan, Haryana and the Saurashtra region of Gujarat .

"We too want to strike it rich in no time," exclaims Raju. He is not alone in this new venture.

"Around 150 farmers in Anantapur district have approached us for help in sourcing seeds to

grow guar crops on more than 300 acres," says Venkateshwara Rao, deputy director (seeds), agriculture department , Andhra Pradesh. Not just in Andhra, farmers across India are in awe of the humble bean. And not without reason.

Guar gum prices have jumped to Rs 30,000 per quintal from Rs 3,000 per quintal a year ago while guar seed prices have gone up to Rs 350 per kg from Rs 30 per kg. Guar gum is traditionally an ingredient for sauces, ice cream and confectionaries. But the stellar rise in its price is due to its use in the petroleum business.

The gum is used as a sealant in the hydraulic fracturing process used for extracting oil and gas from shale. "Farmers in UP, Karnataka and Maharashtra are calling us to understand crop patterns , yielding capacity and marketing methods so that they could sow the crop for the next season that begins in July," says PK Hisariya, president, All India Guar Gum Growers' Association.

Most of the crop is marketed to overseas buyers in Rajasthan but farmers in other regions of the country are ready to go the extra mile in hauling their harvest to the desert state. "The cost of growing the crop is almost a tenth of the export prices.

It's a big opportunity for us to shift to guar," says Mangat Patil, a farmer in Maharashtra's Jalgaon. He will be sowing guar beans for the first time on his one-acre land. India, the world's largest producer of guar beans and gum, exported more than 400,000 lakh tonnes till March 2011. Nearly 80% of exports are to the US, which has been buying from India as its own production is unable to meet the growing demand.



Mangoes exports to US may grow by 43% this year

Agencies Posted online: Thu Jun 07 2012, 13:58 hrs

New Delhi : Mangoes exports from India to the US are likely to rise by 43 per cent to 130 tonnes this year, on higher availability of export quality fruit and robust demand. Last year India, the world's largest grower of the fruit, had shipped about 91 tonnes of mangoes to America.

“Mangoes exports to the US so far has been 90 tonnes and the overall shipments could touch 130 tonnes this year,” a senior official of the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) said.

The shipments to America are expected to be much better than last year as there is good supply of export quality fruit on account of conducive weather conditions, he said, adding that there has also been regular demand for Indian mangoes.

Mangoes are exported to the US via air after the irradiation process, which is a modern food preservation technology that can reduce the risk of food poisoning, control food spoilage and extend shelf-life of food. The US prefers irradiation to get rid of an insect pest mango seed weevils and fruit fly from the fruits.

The official said annual export volumes to the US could improve to 200-300 tonnes, had there been more irradiation centres in key mangoes growing states. At present, there is only one irradiation centre in Nasik district of Maharashtra. As a result, only Alfonso and Kesar varieties of mangoes grown in Maharashtra and Gujarat are being shipped to the US, the official added. Mango exports to the US resumed in 2007. The volumes of export have been below 100 tonnes in the last three years. The country's overall mangoes exports are expected to be around 80,000 tonnes this year.



'Adopt multi-purpose farming for better yield!'

THURSDAY, 07 JUNE 2012 23:48

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE | INDORE

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Farmers Welfare and Agriculture Development Minister Ramkrishna Kushmaria on Thursday exhorted farmers to pursue multi-purpose farming so as to make agriculture a profitable venture.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony of a three-day agriculture fair here, the Minister said that with the help of multi-purpose farming they can get yield of more than one crop which will not only help increase productivity but will also meet the growing market requirements.

In the three-day agriculture fair christened Kisan Vigyan Mela-Kharif 2012, various exhibitions displaying modern agricultural implements have been arranged so as to make farmers aware of scientific and modern agriculture techniques.

Kusmaria asked farmers to adopt modern and scientific agriculture instead of traditional farming methods as it is through modern techniques only that better agriculture yields can be achieved. In order to encourage farmers towards modern agriculture farming, the Government has decided to distribute modern agricultural implements among farmers. Distribution of these implements at respective distribution centres would be made soon.

The Minister asked agriculture department officers to promote organic farming in the district on a large scale. During the mela, farmers must be duly informed about organic farming techniques. The function was addressed by district panchayat president Omprakash Parsawadia, Premnarayan Patel, and deputy director (agriculture) OP Choure, among others.

Business Standard

Friday, Jun 08, 2012

Enough stock for another 2 mt sugar export: Govt

Anindita Dey / Mumbai June 7, 2012, 0:32 IST



The Union ministry of food has worked out an internal limit of two million tonnes of sugar that could be exported under Open General Licence (OGL) till September, without affecting domestic prices.

According to official sources, the ministry expects final

output in the current season to be 25.8 mt, against the earlier estimate of 25.2 mt. They said crushing of cane had ended in north India, but some mills in south India were still reporting production.

The current sugar marketing year started in October last year. India is the world's second-largest producer and biggest consumer. Output was 18.6 mt last year.

Before sugar export was brought under OGL, freeing it from quantitative restrictions, the government had allowed export of two mt. Officials said under the new regime, 170,000-180,000 tonnes of sugar had been registered with the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) for shipment abroad till date. They added the ministry was comfortable with availability of a three-month stock at its disposal for managing domestic demand at any given date. Beyond this limit, the surplus could be considered for exports, they said.

The commerce ministry told millers, once the OGL decision was announced, to register export contracts with it, to keep pace with the quantity of shipment. With the new regime, the DGFT raised the ceiling in each registered contract (RC) from 10,000 tonnes to 25,000 tonnes, equivalent to one vessel load for white sugar. An applicant has the liberty to seek split RCs for export through more than one port, within the overall limit of 25,000 tonnes. Also, the time limit for completing export has been extended from 30 days to 60 days from the date of issuing the RC.

Among other reasons why the Union government keeps control on the marketing of sugar is its requisitioning of what is termed 'levy sugar', the quantity it requires mills to supply (at a price it sets) for subsidised supply through ration shops. It is mandatory for mills to sell a tenth of their production to the government at this lower rate. This levy sugar quota is then allocated to states and Union Territories for the Public Distribution System.

Stabilising guar market, field to mill

With the rush to sow guar on the back of a price surge last year, farmers fear a steep fall in rates this season

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai June 7, 2012, 0:30 IST



With the rush to sow guar seed owing to its huge price surge over the past year, there is also an apprehension of over-supply and prices slumping in the coming harvesting season.

Enter Vikas WSP, a Sriganganagar (Rajasthan) — based guar gum processor and exporter. It has signed guar seed procurement contracts with around 225,000 farmers in the region, with a minimum price guarantee at Rs 50 a kg for the harvested crop.

Though this is less than a sixth of the current price in local mandis, yet enthusiastic farmers signed the contract. For, they get the assurance of a benchmark price which is 60-70 per cent higher than the cost of cultivation. Farmers will be free to sell seeds in the open market if prices at the time of harvesting are higher.

Guar seed and its derivative, guar gum, have seen prices shoot up 1,000 per cent during the past year. As happens with all agri commodities in such cases, sown area is expected to swell; there is anticipation of a 50 per cent increase in both area and output. This could also mean a glut, falling prices and distress sales.

“The guar seed price appreciation started with Rs 40 a kg during the last season. Hence, we fixed a minimum guaranteed price at Rs 50 a kg. Even in a distress sale, farmers would avoid sale at a price below this level,” said B D Agarwal, managing director.

Adding: “We are the largest guar seed crushing company in the region. Hence, even if farmers sell to others, including intermediaries, the commodity would come to us only. The MSP guarantees a minimum return.”

Guar seed (India, particularly Rajasthan, produces much of global supply) is considered cattle feed and hence, the government does not announce a minimum support price for it. In the absence of any benchmark, the price moves with abnormal volatility. During the peak harvesting season, traditionally, this cattle feed is sold at a throwaway price; during the lean season, it jumps through the roof. Its prices rose sharply last year because the final product, guar gum, was needed in the oil exploration business (and there were supply fears, as

output was less than the year before). Guar splits and gum powder are processed to make various derivatives for use in the petroleum, textile, paper, food and pharmaceutical industries, among others. Agriculture ministry data showed guar seed output at 1.25 million tonnes in 2011, about a fifth lower than the 1.5 mt the previous year. This year, output is estimated at 1.8 mt. The sowing begins towards the end of July, for harvesting in November. It is usually a 90-day, rain-fed monsoon crop, requiring eight to 15 inches of rain in three to four spells. For effective guar cultivation, the crop needs two rain spells before sowing, one when the crop buds out and another when it comes up well and blossoming starts. Then it requires plenty of sunshine and dry weather to come up really well. During harvesting, it again needs good sunshine, to dry and become usable for industries. Encouraged by last year's realisation, Vikas WSP has distributed 3,000 tonnes of seed worth Rs 92 crore to 225,000 farmers, to cover around 500,000 ha of sowing area this season. Last year, the company had distributed around 800 tonnes of seed worth around Rs 2 crore. "This is a good beginning for a small commodity like guar seed," said Atul Shah, chief executive officer of Emkay Commodities. Guar seed in the spot Sriganagar mandis is quoted at Rs 315-320 a kg. In March 2011, the spot price was Rs 27 a kg. Guar gum was quoted at the time in the Bikaner mandis at Rs 84 a kg; it is now Rs 1,100 a kg. Vikas WSP has a guar seed crushing plant with 250,000 tonnes of installed capacity. It crushed 140,000 tonnes of seed last year. This year, looking at rising exports of guar gum, the company plans to use full capacity.

Spices Board looks at \$3 bn export turnover by 2016-17

India exports 3.2 million tonnes of various spices, which constitutes almost 50 per cent of the global trade

Press Trust of India / New Delhi June 07, 2012, 15:57 IST



The government has set a target of achieving a turnover of \$3 billion from spices export by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan (2012-17).

"The Spices Board has set the target of achieving a turnover of \$3 billion by the end of the 12th Five Year Plan," Spices Board Director (Marketing) M R Sudharshan said at an event here today.

Speaking at a discussion, organised by industry body PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), on enhancing export of Indian spices, he added that presently the turnover from spices export is about \$1.5 billion annually. India exports 3.2 million tonnes of various spices, which constitutes almost 50 per cent of the global trade. The country had exported 5,25,750 tonnes of spices and spice products valued at Rs 6,840.71 crore (\$1,502.85 million) in the 2010-11 fiscal. "The demand for spices is ever increasing due to rising consumption and we should expand our export basket by introducing more value added products," Sudharshan said. Sharing similar views, National Horticulture Mission Director Sanjeev Chopra said that our processors and exports should inculcate global food safety standards to meet the increasing competition.

Chopra, who is a Joint Secretary in the Agriculture Ministry, added that the government has started programmes to boost spices production, processing and exports.

"Government has introduced the Public Private Partnership model to strengthen backward integration to increase post harvest management and processing facilities," he noted.

Programme has also been launched to create farmer produce groups, groups of marginal farmers, so that they can trade directly with companies and increase the value of their produce and ultimately their profits, he added.

During the discussion stress was also laid on tackling the issue of tariff and non-tariff barriers.

India may sell wheat to Glencore

Bloomberg / New Delhi June 7, 2012, 0:18 IST



India plans to sell 98,000 tonnes of wheat to Glencore International for export, as the country, the world's second-largest grower, seeks to cut record state inventories, said two government officials.

The cabinet is set to allow the State Trading Corp (STC) next week to sell 38,000 tonnes at \$230 a tonne and 60,000 tonnes at \$228 a tonne, said the officials, who declined to be identified because the plan is private. The price is less than the Rs 18,220 (\$328) a tonne cost to the government of buying and storing the grain, they said.

India is seeking to cut reserves held by the state-owned Food Corporation of India (FCI) to create room for a sixth year of record harvests. Production will be 90.2 million tonnes in the year ending June 30, the Agriculture Ministry said. The country scrapped a four-year ban on exports by private traders in September.

“Global prices are expected to plunge with exports from India and commencement of Russia’s new crop from July,” said T P S Narang, an adviser at the New Delhi-based Emmsons International, a grain exporter.

Wheat for July delivery rose 0.8 per cent to \$6.18 a bushel on the Chicago Board of Trade by 4:55 pm Mumbai time. Futures have fallen 16 per cent since September 8, when India ended the ban on shipments.

N C Joshi, a spokesman for the Food Ministry here, and Pravin Dongre, chief executive officer of Glencore Grain India Pvt, declined to comment.

THE HINDU Business Line

Oil falls on fading US stimulus hopes

PTI

Singapore, June 8:

Oil prices fell in Asian trade today as hopes dimmed for stimulus measures to re-energise the faltering US economy, analysts said.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in July, was down \$2.04 to \$82.78 a barrel and Brent North Sea crude for July delivery shed \$1.48 to \$98.45 in morning trade.

"Oil prices have fallen along with equity markets after (US) Federal Reserve Chairman, Mr Ben Bernanke, tempered hopes that there would be more stimulus for the US economy," said Mr Victor Shum, senior principal at Purvin and Gertz international energy consultants in Singapore.

Mr Bernanke's failure to signal any new stimulus on the way for the world's biggest economy, in remarks yesterday to a Congressional panel, dragged on equity and oil markets. The United States is the world's top oil consumer.

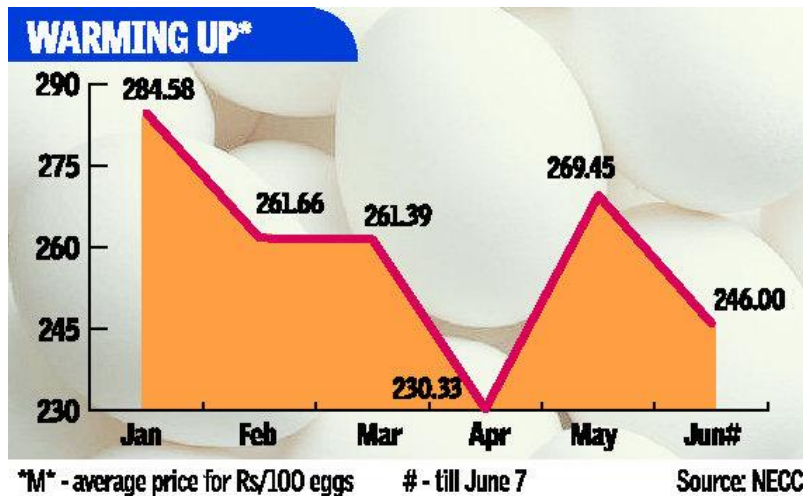
Worries are also mounting over Chinese demand after Beijing announced a cut in interest rates yesterday to boost the world's second largest economy and biggest energy consumer.

"The interest rate cut by China is also weighing on the market. It is being seen as a sign that the May economic data that will be released soon are quite weak," he added.

Monetary easing had been expected in China following dismal economic figures in April and weak manufacturing numbers in May.

Egg prices raised 4% on demand hopes

Gayathri G.



Chennai, June 7:

Egg prices in Namakkal, the country's eggland, rose four per cent in a week on rise in demand with summer drawing to a close. The Namakkal-based National Egg Coordinaton Committee (NECC) has increased the price of an egg by 12 paise to Rs 2.95 this week.

An ever-increasing demand, spiralling input costs, pricey fish and vegetables have resulted in egg prices rising steadily. With the monsoon setting in and the decision by Kerala and Karnataka (major markets for Tamil Nadu's poultry trade) Governments to impose a ban on fishing from June 14 , the poultry industry expects egg and chicken prices to be on the boil again.

“End of austere seasons, summer and re-opening of schools have brought us some cheer,” said a poultry-unit owner.

In Tamil Nadu alone, some 70 lakh eggs are consumed in schools under the Noon Meal Scheme. The re-opening of schools, a major consumer of eggs under noon-meal scheme, also provides a shot in the arm to the industry whose export basket almost dried up.

Mr P. Selvaraj, Chairman of the NECC's Namakkal zone, told *Business Line* that soaring cost of soyameal – a key ingredient in poultry feed is also one of the reasons. Soyameal at Indore ruled at Rs 28,200-28,400 a tonne on Thursday against Rs 17,700 during the corresponding period a year ago. Feed costs account for two-thirds of cost of production in a poultry unit.

Prices of layer birds has been increased to Rs 48/kg (Rs 44) and is likely to go up further on demand hopes while the Broiler Coordination Committee has retained last week's Rs 76/kg. Broiler prices touched Rs 75 during March 2011.

Turmeric gains lustre on lower arrivals



Erode, June 7:

Spot turmeric prices gained as arrivals were lower and the futures market gained on Thursday.

“ Besides lower arrivals, some local bulk buyers have received orders. So higher prices were quoted,” said Mr R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Growers brought lower quantity in view of prices dropping regularly. Only 10,000-odd bags arrived against the usual 15,000-and-odd bags. These developments compelled buyers to quote Rs 200 a quintal higher. Growers said that they were not satisfied with the marginal increase of Rs 200 a quintal. Traders said that the increase was temporary. Prices were likely to go down to Rs 3,300-3,500 a quintal within a couple of days. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales Yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,391-3,455 a quintal and the root variety at Rs 2,319-3,255.

Salem crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 3,020-3,998 and the root variety Rs 2,919-3,569. Of the total arrival of 1,856 bags, 1,032 were sold. At the Regulated Marketing Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,193-3,559 and the root variety Rs 3,099-3,419. Of 1,328 bags that arrived, 1,276 were sold. At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,987-3,789 and the root variety Rs 2,510-3,580. Four hundred and twelve bags of turmeric were sold against the arrival of 421. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 2,810-3,686. The root variety was quoted at Rs 2,891-3,541. All 1,047 bags of turmeric kept for sale were sold.

Bearish sentiment cools edible oils



Mumbai, June 7:

A bearish price forecast for palm oil by leading analyst at a seminar held in Mumbai weighed on Malaysia crude palm oil futures that closed lower on Thursday. The futures open higher on

gains in Chicago soya oil but then loss the ground. The bearish trend in Malaysia cooled down sentiment in physical market here leaving activities dull during the day said traders.

Tracking sharp volatility in Malaysian markets, palmolein rose by Re 1/10 kg, while soya oil ruled steady. Firm reports from producing centres pushed up groundnut oil, sunflower expeller refined oil and cottonseed oil by Rs 5 each. Rapeseed oil rose by Rs 10. Mr Dorab Mistry, Director of Godrej International Ltd said: "Demand for palm oil for Ramadan has not been up to expectation. Crude palm oil prices can fall to a level of 2,700-2,800 ringgits and then, it may recover to 3,300 ringgits as low prices stimulate demand". "If market repeats the 2008 scenario CPO futures can even collapse to 2,200 ringgits level. The main catalyst for palm oil prices are the fall in crude oil prices which have fallen by almost \$20 in last two months. As crude oil falls bio-diesel becomes uncompetitive," he said. In Rajkot – Saurashtra, groundnut oil gained further by Rs 20 to Rs 1,890 (Rs 1,870) for *Telia* tin and by Rs 25 to Rs 1,235 (Rs 1,210) for loose - 10kgs. In Mumbai, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 612-613, soya oil at Rs 695 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 720. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 605 for Patalganga for July. Soya refined oil was quoted at Rs 693-695 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 720. Allana's rate for palmolein was Rs 610 for July 15-30. Bunge quoted palmolein Rs 610 for weekly delivery. Towards the day end, resellers quoted palmolein at Rs 602 -603. Malaysia's crude palm oil July contracts closed at MYR 2,980 (MYR 3,003), August at MYR 2,974 (MYR 3,003) and September at MYR 2,975 (MYR 3,000) a tonne. **The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates were (Rs/10 kg):** Groundnut oil 1,180 (1,175), soya refined oil 690 (690), sunflower exp. ref. 655 (660), sunflower ref. 715 (715), rapeseed ref. oil 807 (797), rapeseed expeller ref. 777 (767) cotton ref. oil 670 (665) and palmolein 609 (608).

Rising futures sweeten spot sugar

Mumbai, June 7:

Sugar prices witnessed a mixed trend in the physical market on Thursday. The fine variety S-grade dropped by Rs 5 a quintal, while M-grade was up by Rs 5. Naka and Mill tender rates rule unchanged for the second consecutive day.



Improvement in the futures market supported the sentiment in the domestic market. Mr Jagdish Rawal, a wholesaler, said that the volume at upper level improved due to increased lifting by stockists. Resale selling pressure for due date lifting was not witnessed due to expectation of improvement in demand. With the onset of monsoon, demand from traders will ease. They will keep away from building up new inventories and that may increase pressure on producers.

He said that producers are already under pressure of exhausting the April-June quarterly free sale quota before the month end as they did not sell sufficient quantity in April and May, expecting higher demand and price.

In the Vashi wholesale market, arrivals were 54-55 truckloads, while local dispatches were about 50-51 loads.

On Wednesday, 20-22 mills sold about 85,000–90,000 bags to local traders in the range of Rs 2,770-2,830 (Rs 2,770-2,830) for S-grade and Rs 2,840-2,910 (Rs 2,840-2,910) for M-grade. Buying from neighbouring States was absent.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates (Rs/quintal): S-grade Rs 2,920-2,965 (Rs 2,920-2,971) and M-grade Rs 2,992-3,141 (Rs 2,992-3,136).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 2,860 -2,900 (Rs 2,860-2,900) and M-grade Rs 2,950-3,010 (Rs 2,950-3,010).

New enquiries boost Pusa varieties



Karnal, June 7:

New trade enquires pushed up prices of Pusa-1121 varieties and duplicate basmati, while all other aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties remained range-bound on Thursday.

Some bulk buying lifted the prices, said Mr Amit Chandna, Proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company.

Bulk buyers took fresh positions by buying at current levels as Pusa-1121 varieties are ruling almost Rs 1,000 below the higher levels of the season, he said.

The market may not sustain on current levels for long as traders would take advantage and would try to offload their maximum stocks in the market.

Non-basmati varieties are range-bound within a negative territory as demand for non-basmati is not picking up, said Mr Chandana.

Pusa-1121(steam) went up Rs 400 and quoted at Rs 6,000 a quintal, while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 5,000, Rs 450 up from previous level.

Prices of pure basmati varieties remained unchanged; Pure Basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 5,500, while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 5,000.

For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Tibar sold at Rs 3,800, Dubar Rs 2,800-2,900 and Mongra at Rs 2,100-2,300.

Prices of duplicate basmati increased Rs 200 at Rs 4,500. PR-14 (steam) Rs 2,400-2,600, Sugandha (steam) Rs 3,700.

Non-basmati varieties remained range bound. Sharbati (steam) sold at Rs 3,400-3,450 while (sela) Rs 3,200.

Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,000-2,100, Permal (sela) Rs 2,120 , PR-11 (sela) Rs 2,300-2,500 and PR-11 (Raw) at Rs 2,450 a quintal.

Jeera slips as traders cut forward positions



Rajkot, June 7:

Jeera futures declined as participants cut their positions on the back of below normal demand in the spot market. Spot jeera prices remained unchanged, though.

Market analysts said that the fall in jeera futures was mostly attributed to off-loading of positions by speculators following subdued demand. However, shrinking supplies in the market restricted losses.

Analyst said that domestic demand continues to be firm as exporters are buying at the current prices. On Wednesday and Thursday, prices had gone up by Rs 200 a quintal. On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera for delivery in July fell by Rs 195 or 1.47 per cent to Rs 13,062.50 a quintal with an open interest of 17,814 lots. NCDEX August jeera contracts were down Rs 202.50 to Rs 13,460 a quintal with an open interest of 8,658 lots.

New jeera of medium quality quoted at Rs 1,925-2,075 for a *maund* of 20 kg. NCDEX quality raw quoted at Rs 2,365-2,475 a *maund* in Unjha market. Arrival stood at 9,000 bags and traded around 10,000 bags. Raw jeera at Jodhpur in Rajasthan quoted at Rs 11,200-12,000 a quintal. Arrival reported around 100 bags. Meanwhile, daily arrivals at Unjha have dropped to around 7,000-8,000 bags of 60 kg each from 8,000-10,000 bags. Prices could rise if arrivals continue to decline.

Pepper futures fall on selling pressure

G. K. Nair



Kochi, June 7:

The pepper market on Thursday slipped on selling at lower levels on the exchange platform and bearish sentiments. All the active contracts dropped to much below the previous day's closing.

June opened on high volatility with price difference between buying and selling at very high levels. Beginning of the afternoon witnessed the June price touching the highest price of the day at Rs 39,975 a quintal and then dropping sharply and at the end of afternoon it hit the lowest price of the day at Rs 39,330 a quintal. High volatility was there throughout the trading.

July pattern was, however, different. It opened at the highest price of the day and prices were moving up and down with marginal volatility and downtrend in the afternoon and touched the lowest price of the day and then recovered and ended much below the previous day closing.

There appeared to be a calculated attempt to widen the “ulta badla” so that sellers who got goods on the exchange platform would opt for staggered delivery introduced recently and tender their goods for early delivery under the new system, market sources told *Business Line*.

At the same time, speculative long position holders would opt for “badla” as they will get July cheaper. They could sell June and buy July. Thus the positions on the exchange could be maintained, they said.

Arrivals from the primary markets were negligible and what ever material arrived was from the plains and that was traded at Rs375 a kg.

There was good liquidation, or rather selling at lower levels, they said.

June contract on the NCDEX decreased by Rs 680 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 39,440 a quintal. July and August dropped by Rs 805 and Rs 855 respectively to the LTP of Rs 38,875 and Rs 39,070 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover declined by two tonnes to 2,754 tonnes. Total open interest fell by 339 tonnes to 5,450 tonnes.

June open interest dropped by 286 tonnes to 1,683 tonnes while that of July decreased by 116 tonnes to 3.118 tonnes. August increased by 64 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend dropped by Rs 300 to close at Rs 37,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 39,000 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market at \$7,400 a tonne (c&f) for the Europe and \$7,700 a tonne (c&f) for the US. The fall in futures prices was not reflected on the parity because of the strengthening of the rupee against the dollar today.

There were strong rumours in the air in the upper Indian consumer markets that Sri Lankan pepper would be imported under the Free Trade Agreement. However, there exists a cap on imports fixed at 2,500 tonnes under the FTA.

There are reportedly all-round efforts being made to lift the cap but given the present trade imbalance, the trade here believe, lifting the cap is appears to be unlikely, they added.

Mustard oil rally halted on slack demand



Indore, June 7:

Rally in mustard oil ended on slack buying and decline in mustard seeds futures with its prices in Madhya Pradesh and adjoining *mandis* in Rajasthan and Gujarat declining by Rs 5 a quintal.

In Indore mandis, mustard oil ruled at Rs 740, Neemuch - Rs 735, Moorena - Rs 742, Kota - Rs 740, Ganga Nagar (Niwai) - Rs 745, Jaipur - Rs 755, while in Gujarat *mandis* mustard oil ruled at Rs 735. Compared to its prices a week ago, mustard oil prices are, however, still ruling low with its prices in Indore mandis declining by Rs 10, while it is Rs 15 down in Neemuch and Rs 8 down in Moorena. According to Mr Kailash Agrawal, an Indore-based mustard oil trader,

notwithstanding bearish sentiment in mustard oil, futures appear to be bullish with rise in demand in the coming days from the pickle manufacturers during the rainy season. Favourable weather condition and possibility of timely arrival of monsoon in the coming days will also add cushion to bullish sentiment. Mustard seeds, on the other hand, ruled stable on subdued buying support with its price in Indore mandis being quoted at Rs 3,700-3,800 a quintal, while in Neemuch, it ruled at Rs 3,600-3,625. With steady arrival and lack of enthusiastic buying support, mustard prices for the past one month have remained range-bound. However, with depleting stock and rise in demand from crushers, traders expect at least a rise of Rs 100-150 a quintal in the coming days, said Mr Ankit Bafna, a Neemuch-based mustard seeds trader.

With some improved demand in the physical market in the past two-three days, plant deliveries in mustard for Jaipur gained Rs 10-15 at Rs 3,850 a quintal. Mustard seeds futures declined on the NCDEX on lack of buying support with its June and July contracts closing at Rs 3,725 a quintal (down Rs 22) and Rs 3,784 a quintal (down Rs 20).

Traders expect a rally in futures in the coming day with rise in buying support in physical market in the coming days. Arrival of mustard seeds in the country on Thursday was recorded at 1 lakh bags against 8,000 bags in Madhya Pradesh, 7,000 bags in Uttar Pradesh, 63,000 bags in Rajasthan, 8,000 bags in Punjab/Haryana, 7,000 bags in Gujarat and remaining 8,000 bags elsewhere.

Nilgiri tea growers seek revival of pruning scheme



Coonoor, June 7:

Small-scale tea growers in the Nilgiri region have appealed to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce headed by Mr Shantha Kumar to take steps to arrange for intensive pruning of their tea fields.

“We have submitted a memorandum to the members of the Committee currently touring the Nilgiris district as we have identified at least 10,000 hectares fit for pruning every year,” the Tea Board Member Dr S. Ramu told *Business Line*.

“Tea Board along with Tamil Nadu Government had been operating a scheme of pruning some years ago. Many tea bushes are old and need to be pruned to maintain quality. Since the quality of the manufactured tea depends on the quality of the green leaf, we have appealed to the Committee to recommend the revival of the scheme offering subsidy to small growers to prune their fields”, he said.

“We have also sought the continuance of the factory modernisation scheme during the XII Plan raising the subsidy to 50 per cent of the machinery cost from the previous level of 25 per cent,” he noted.

'Tech infusion key to boosting farm output'



Mumbai, June 7:

Adoption of new varieties of genetically modified (GM) seeds and modern technology can help meet the growing demand for food in India, said Dr K.R. Kranthi, Director, Central Institute for Cotton Research.

“The country will be wasting crores of rupees on research if it is not going to adopt the new seeds released by research institutes,” he said, speaking at a seminar “Technology as a Driver of Growth: Ensuring Farm Prosperity,” organised by *IndoAsiancommodities.com*, a platform to discuss issues relating to agriculture.

The success of Bt cotton needs to be replicated in other farm produce, especially when agricultural land availability is fast shrinking. The need of the hour is to increase yields per acre through use of modern techniques, said Mr Kranthi.

Productivity

Dr J. S. Pai, Executive Director, Protein Foods and Nutrition Development Association of India, said though the country produces a record 250 million tonnes of foodgrains annually, 42 per cent of women and children remain malnourished. Productivity needs to be enhanced substantially to ensure that everyone has access to nutritious food, he said. “New technologies should be adopted to introduce improved varieties of seeds in fruits, vegetables and feed for animal husbandry products, where the demand elasticity is more,” said Mr Pai.

When a farmer makes better use of market requirements

A.J. Vinayak



Business Line Sugarcane plants at Mr Ramanath Attar's field at Moodshedde village in Mangalore taluk. - Photo: A. J. Vinayak

Mangalore, June 7:

Mangalore is not a sugarcane-growing area. However, sensing the potential for this commodity during a particular season, a farmer here has been growing it for nearly two decades.

Mr Ramanath Attar (57), a farmer from Moodshedde village in Mangalore, has been cultivating sugarcane for the past 18 years.

Recalling his entry into farming, Mr Attar told *Business Line* that he started growing chillies ('Harekala chilly', a local brand) on 20 cents of land (one acre is equal to 100 cents) when he was in ninth standard. While his father was cultivating paddy and other crops in their field, Mr Attar ventured into cultivating chilly then.

"My father allowed me to cultivate chilly on 20 cents of land, and the amount collected from that crop was my pocket money during those days," he told this reporter.

Timing

On the reason behind sugarcane cultivation, he said he grows them to sell in Mangalore during the Ganesha festival. Last year, he cultivated around 24 tonnes of sugarcane on two acres of land. A stack of 12 sugarcanes, approximately 20 kg, were sold at Rs 125 a kg last year, he said.

Though a major portion is harvested for Ganesha festival, he sells the rest to sugarcane juice stalls in Mangalore city and the neighbouring areas.

When he started sugarcane cultivation 18 years ago, there was a sugar factory at Brahmavar in the neighbouring Udupi district. That was closed a few years ago.

Undeterred by its closure, he found potential for selling this commodity during Ganesha festival.

Cucumber loss

Golden cucumber, which is used in vegetarian curry, is an intercrop that is cultivated along with sugarcane in his field. Mr Attar said both the seeds are planted on two acres of land in November-December. He gets golden cucumber yield in 60-70 days.

This year, around 4.5 tonnes of golden cucumber were produced. He sold them at Rs 14-18 a kg. A major portion of expenses on sugarcane cultivation is recovered from this crop, he said.

However, he was not so lucky with golden cucumber last year. In spite of cultivating around nine tonnes of golden cucumber last year, he got only Rs 4.50 a kg. "A major portion of that crop was wasted," he said.

The main reason for good price this year is the increase in the prices of vegetables, he said.

Coming back to chillies, he said now he grows them on 80 cents of land. "Four decades ago, I was getting Rs 3 a kg for this local chilly.

In the last season, I got around Rs 200 a kg," he said. Hardly a few farmers grow it. He did not find any problem with weather for growing these crops. But wild boar and peacocks are affecting his sugarcane and chilly crops, respectively, he said.

His 10 acre land has other crops such as ridge gourd, lady's finger (okra), coconut, arecanut and paddy.

Mr Attar said the number of people into farming has come down drastically in the last 10 years. Around 75 families were involved in agriculture at his Moodshedde village a decade ago. Now, hardly seven-eight are continuing with it, he said. He wonders what will happen in the next decade.

Monsoon to hit Kolkata only after June 10

Kolkata, June 7:

Even as morning showers brought a relief in parts of Kolkata, monsoon is yet to enter the city and South Bengal.

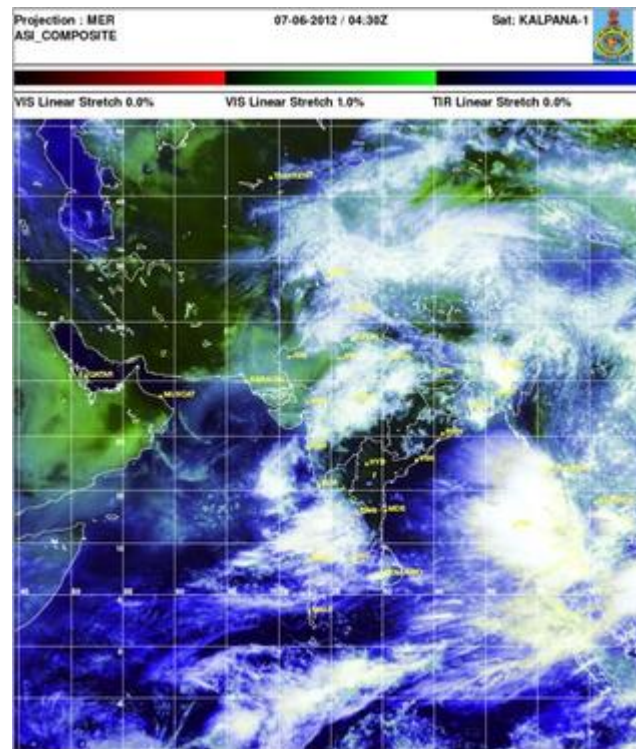
The Met office forecasts hold less hope for the scorching heat to disappear as maximum temperature is likely to remain 39 degree Celsius with partly cloudy sky.

According to Mr. G C Debnath, Director, Regional Met Office at Alipore, hot and sultry weather will remain as monsoon is expected arrive only after June 10 in Kolkata and the entire South Bengal.

Mr. Debnath said monsoon has only made its advent in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts of North Bengal so far.

Monsoon gets stuck again, may weaken

Vinson Kurian



Thiruvananthapuram, June 7:

The monsoon seems to have got stuck on the way yet again, only a day after making an onset over mainland India.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Thursday that the system had not progressed beyond the Satara-Belgaum-Madikeri-Kodaikanal-Gangtok alignment.

EARLY DEFICIT

It also said that the monsoon rainfall was 36 per cent below average in the week ending June 6.

This was expected after the seasonal rains missed their usual arrival date of June 1 over the Kerala coast.

The suspected weakening of the monsoon is being attributed to a fresh tropical cyclone 'Kuena,' which had sprung up upstream overnight on Thursday.

Its location in southwest Indian Ocean, northeast of Madagascar, was assessed as prejudicial to the larger cause of the monsoon.

By Thursday evening, the storm had weakened and lay as a low-pressure area to the northeast of Madagascar.

OFFSHORE TROUGH

Even this could be bothersome since it can weaken a powerful anti-cyclone circulation in the region considered the powerhouse for monsoon.

This anti-cyclone steers the trade winds from south of the equator and powers them to become southwesterly monsoon flows towards the Kerala coast.

On Thursday, the offshore trough, the elongated region of lower pressure and an indicator of an active phase of monsoon, lay extended from Konkan to Kerala.

It was topped off by a persisting upper air cyclonic circulation over east-central Arabian Sea and adjoining coastal Karnataka persists in lower levels.

HEAVY RAINS

The IMD has warned of heavy rainfall at one or two places over coastal Karnataka, Kerala and Andaman and Nicobar Islands during next two days.

A passing western disturbance in northwest India would bring thunder squalls over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and north Rajasthan on Friday.

An extended forecast valid until Sunday said that rain or thundershowers would occur at many places over Kerala, coastal Karnataka, Konkan, Goa and Lakshadweep.

Rains are also likely at a few places over interior Karnataka and south Madhya Maharashtra and at one or two places over Marathwada and Gujarat.