

07.11.2015

THE HINDU

232 paddy purchasing centres to be opened in Krishna

Krishna District Joint Collector G. Chandruru here on Friday said that a total of 232 Paddy Purchasing Centres (PPC) would be opened across the Krishna district to procure paddy in the Kharif season 2015-16. Mr. Chandruru has reviewed necessary arrangement to procure paddy from the farmers soon after the harvesting operations are begin.

Mr. Chandruru said that the district administration has targeted to procure 6.4 lakh metric tonnes of paddy through the PPCs.

“The production of paddy in the Kharif 2015-16 is expected to be above 11 lakh metric tonnes. A total of 132 PPCs will be opened by the Self Help Groups”, said Mr. Chandruru during the review meet with the officials concerned.

The Primary Agriculture Credit Societies will open 86 PPCs while District Co-operative Marketing Society will open 86 PPCs in the district.

The date of paddy procurement would soon be announced based on the harvesting operations which are likely to be start from November end.

The officials and the staff from the Agriculture, Revenue and Rural Development departments would be trained in the paddy procurement process.

MNREGA to the rescue of farmers

Mashal GP constructs farm ponds under the scheme to provide irrigation facilities

Workers constructing a farm pond under the MNREGA funds at an agricultural field at Mashal in Afzalpur taluk of Kalaburagi district.— photo: arun kulkarni

Mashal Gram Panchayat in Afzalpur taluk, one of the drought-prone and backward areas of Kalaburagi district, has shown the way as to how Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) can be used to bring smiles back on farmers' faces through water conservation.

Parts of the taluk are fed by River Bhima, but large tracts of agricultural land are facing drought since the Bhima Lift Irrigation project is yet to be completed.

Groundwater levels here have gone down, with open wells and borewells used for irrigation purposes going entirely dry during summer.

An initiative that has come to the rescue here is construction of farm ponds under the MNREGA, which provides irrigation facilities as well as acts as percolation tanks to recharge groundwater sources.

The gram panchayat has taken up large-scale construction of farm ponds and soil conservation works to arrest the run off of rainwater and washing away of the top soil.

Of 30 farm ponds taken up this year, 26 have been completed. In a few completed ponds, water was stored during the rain in September and October.

“This has helped recharge my dried borewell to an extent,” said Hiragappa Shivalingappa Rugi, a small farmer owning four acres of rain-fed land.

“After the completion of 30 ponds, it would be ready to store rainwater during the next season and help farmers by providing irrigation facility to at least one acre of their land. It will also help in recharging dried up open wells and borewells in the village,” said Panchayat Development Officer

M.G. Puranik. He said that in the normal course, the cost of construction of the 30 tanks would have cost Rs. 21.21 lakh but the cost has been cut down to Rs. 13.18 lakh here. This has saved the government Rs. 8 lakh by avoiding middlemen.

Water from Papanasam dam released for 'pisanam' paddy

14,351.17 mcft to be discharged from Papanasam, Servalar, Manimuthar dams



In full force:Water released from Papanasam dam for 'pisanam' paddy cultivation in Tirunelveli district on Friday.

Collector M. Karunakaran on Friday released water from Papanasam dam for 'pisanam' paddy cultivation to be taken up on 86,107 acres.

Dr. Karunakaran said water would be released from the dam for 146 days on 'turn basis' till March 31, 2016 depending upon the storage level and rainfall in the catchment areas.

A total of 14,351.17 million cubic feet of water would be discharged from the Papanasam, Servalar and the Manimuthar dams during this season.

Water would be released in North Kodaimelazhgiyaan, South Kodaimelazhgiyaan, Nadhiyuni, Kannadiyan Kodagan, Tirunelveli and Palayam channels in Tirunelveli district and Marudhur Melakkaal, Marudhur Keezhakkaal, North and South Main Channels in Tuticorin district.

“Agriculture department officials have been instructed to adequately stock seeds, fertilizers and other agro inputs. Hence, farmers should commence their farming operations in full swing while judiciously using the available water,” Dr. Karunakaran also said.

Sub-Collector, Cheranmahadevi, V. Vishnu was present.

Modern wholesale vegetable market to come up at Belagavi APMC



Belagavi APMC chairman Shivangouda S. Patil addressing a press meet in Belagavi on Friday.

A modern wholesale vegetable market, a dream project of the Belagavi Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC), has finally taken shape now.

With the State government clearing the Rs. 69.79-crore project and sanctioning Rs. 4 crore to commence construction works in the first phase, Small Scale Industries and district in-charge Minister Satish L. Jarkiholi will formally lay the foundation stone at 4 p.m. on November 9.

APMC chairman Shivangouda S. Patil said here on Friday that the modern market would go a long way in helping growers get competitive prices for vegetable produces and minimise the exploitation by traders. “As of now, nearly 100 to 120 truck loads of vegetables are off-loaded to Goa and another 40 to 50 truck loads to Pune and Mumbai a day. Vegetable trading will get a boost once the modern market is established,” Mr. Patil said.

He said the proposed complex would come on 16.4 acres within the APMC premises. It would have a cold storage, ripening unit, grading and clearing unit, and auction platforms for onion and potato, the two major crops. The other facilities included five blocks consisting of 184 shops spread over 11,904.29 sq m.

One of the major problems the APMC was facing was staff shortage, which was affecting the monitoring of auctions and prices and was leading to exploitation of farmers, Mr. Patil said.

He said there were only 11 staff members at the Belagavi APMC, including secretary, attenders, drivers and peons as against 41 sanctioned posts. There were totally 16 APMCs in 10 taluks in the district with 245 sanctioned posts but 150 of them are vacant for long.

APMC vice-chairman Bhagappa B. Kolkar, and secretary K.H. Guruprasad were present.

Satish L. Jarkiholi to lay the foundation stone on November 9

This Deepavali will be a special one for these farmers

This year’s Deepavali will indeed be a festival of lights for the nearly 200 members of the Belgaum Shahar Shetkari Sanghatana. For the past 15 years, they were just observing it without any fanfare as they had been engaged in a legal battle with a politically influential private group to reclaim their agricultural land.

“We have a strong reason to cherish this occasion as we have won a long protracted legal battle to save our agricultural land from the private group which tried to grab our land fraudulently in connivance with officials,” says Narayan Sawant, convener of the sanghatana.

The sanghatana, represented by small and marginal farmers holding agricultural land along the Pune-Bengaluru NH4, launched the legal battle against Parivartan Alpa Sankhyak Krushi Seva Sangh floated by family members and close relatives of the former Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Abhay Patil after they allegedly tried to grab their land.

Mr. Sawant told *The Hindu* here on Friday that the sangh had colluded with the officials of the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board to acquire 13 acres and 27 guntas of fertile agriculture land falling within the ‘Green Belt’ of the Comprehensive Development Plan of Belagavi city, through fraudulent means. All those who questioned the move were allegedly threatened.

A Division Bench of the High Court at Dharwad, headed by Justice D.V. Shylendra Kumar and Justice B.V. Pinto, quashed the land acquisition by the KIADB. The sangha filed a special leave petition challenging this decision in the Supreme Court in this September, only to be dismissed by the bench headed by Justice Anil R. Dave and Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel.

The court verdict had sent a strong message to all those who were trying to grab agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, Mr. Sawant said.

The sanghatana has decided to organise a gathering of farmers, to be addressed by anti-corruption crusader Anna Hazare in the city next month. Advocates who represented them in the court will be felicitated.

Sweet tidings for beekeeping

Shaji Daniel, HortiCorp resource person, explaining different aspects of beekeeping during a training session at Peruvannamuzhi in Kozhikode.

: With the rise in demand for honey in the domestic market, beekeeping has become a greatly rewarding enterprise, said Shaji Daniel, HortiCorp resource person.



Mr. Daniel, who led a district-level training programme on beekeeping organised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at Peruvannamuzhi, said it should be undertaken after obtaining proper training. Honey is a natural sweetener with a blend of sugar, enzymes, minerals, vitamins, and amino acids, etc. According to Mr. Daniel, it takes about 60,000 bees, collectively travelling up to 55,000 miles and visiting more than 2 million flowers, to gather enough nectar to make one pound of honey. Through beekeeping, one can help honey bees to collect more honey into a harvestable form and thereby make it a lucrative business, he said.

Speaking at different sessions of the three-day training programme, which concluded on Thursday, Mr. Daniel described in detail about different species of honeybees, their behaviour, bee colony maintenance, significance of beekeeping, pest and disease management in apiary (a place where bees are kept in several beehives). He also explained the business possibilities of different by-products, including bee wax, propolis and royal jelly, of beekeeping.


More than 20 persons, including rural youth, farmers and business personnel from different parts of the district, attended the programme. Practical sessions as part of the training were conducted on the KVK campus at Peruvannamuzhi. An exposure visit to the apiary at the District Agricultural Farm at Koothali was also arranged as part of the programme. “It immensely

helped the participants to understand the finer details of beekeeping,” said K K Aiswariya, subject matter specialist (Plant Protection) of KVK.

Interacting with the participants, P. Rathakrishnan, programme coordinator of KVK, highlighted the importance of beekeeping and the need to identify pure honey from adulterated varieties of honey. The participants, who were provided training materials, were issued participation certificates after the event. Those who successfully complete the training are also eligible for obtaining beehives and other accessories to start the business at 40 per cent subsidy from HortiCorp, said Ms. Aiswariya. Details can be had from the KVK office. Ph: 0496 2666041.

Pricey dal, veggies take away sheen of Deepavali

OUT OF REACH	
COMMODITY	PRICES
Red gram	Rs. 230 per kg
Black gram	Rs. 170 a kg
Onion	Rs. 45 a kg
Tomato	Rs. 45 a kg
Brinjal	Rs .60-80 a kg
Cauliflower	Rs 50 a piece (medium size)
Cashew	Rs. 800 a kg
Dried grapes	Rs. 400 a kg



Quality of medhu vada and idli has reduced at roadside eateries as black gram price has doubled in three months. — FILE PHOTO

We used to go in for dishes made of pulses, when vegetables were pricey. But this time, both have become unaffordable- Curry point owners

The quantum jump in the prices of pulses and vegetables appears to have taken the sheen away of the festive reason.

The otherwise overcrowded markets in Chittoor ahead of Deepavali and Ayyappa deeksha season in Chittoor which is known for availability of the groundnut, dal varieties, fresh vegetables in November are seen dull with the customers weighing their options to choose staples in their budget, as red gram and black gram price hovering around Rs. 230 and Rs. 170 per kg.

The size of *medhu vada* (also known as *uddi vada*) and quality of *idli* have come down at roadside eateries and hotels, as the black gram price has doubled in just three months. The usual breakfast *sambhar-vada* has become a difficult menu to afford for both the hotels and customers as red gram price has taken a quantum jump to Rs. 230 per kg from Rs. 100 in a few months.

Kitchens in households too are going to give the usual choicest cuisines a miss this Deepavali as relatively less priced bengal gram has already replaced red gram in several houses. “We want to keep the festive delicacies as simple as possible this time as prices of staples have gone beyond reach,” says a housewife. “We used to go for pulse dishes, when vegetable are become pricey. But this time, both have become unaffordable,” says curry point owners.

Vegetables prices are also going through the roof. Free salads have gone off the tables in hotels with onion and tomato prices prevail at Rs. 45 per kg. “We have stopped giving salad as a complementary. If customers demand, we are charging extra for it,” says a hotel owner near Gandhi Bomma Centre said.

Deepavali pyasam will be an austere affair this time as prices of cashew, dried grapes are burning holes in pockets, says a housewife.

We used to go in for dishes made of pulses, when vegetables were pricey. But this time, both have become unaffordable
- Curry point owners

Karikalan is new Director of Agriculture

T. Karikalan has been appointed as the Director of Agriculture in a reshuffle of 14 government officials in the territorial administration.

Mr. Karikalan will in addition to charges (Managing Director, PIPDIC/Special Secretary, Fisheries and Revenue) already held by him will also function as the Director of Agriculture.

S. Ganessin, Managing Director, PAPSCO, has been posted as the Member Secretary, Bharathiar Palkalaikoodam on deputation in the reassigning of departments among Puducherry Civil Service officers.

According to a notification from Lieutenant Governor A.K. Singh, L. Mohamed Mansoor is appointed as Director of Higher and Technical Education while M. Panchatcharam has been posted as Deputy Secretary (AR Wing). S. Nagarajan, Deputy Director (Civil Supplies) will hold additional charge of Managing Director of Jayaprakash Cooperative Spinning Mills, Karaikal. B. Prabakaran is the Chief Superintendent of Jails. B. Zareena Begam has been appointed Officer on Special Duty, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services. M. Gunasekaran will hold additional charge of Managing Director of PAPSCO in addition to charges already held by him.

Officials of territorial administration reshuffled

Now, rain guns to save crops

The State government will save the standing crops of paddy, chilli and cotton by procuring rain guns, Minister for Agriculture Prathipati Pulla Rao told *The Hindu* on Friday.

Mr. Pulla Rao said a final agreement would be signed in a day or two with the firms providing rain guns to provide wetting to parched lands under the NSP Right Canal.

The rain guns could pump jets of water covering large areas. But they should be used with caution during flowering season. Farmers would be provided assistance in using rain guns.

“We are working on an agreement under which both the State government and the farmers will share the cost of wetting. We are estimating wetting of each acre will cost about Rs.3,000 to Rs.3,500 and soon we will launch rain guns in 10,000 acres under NSP command area this year and in next year, we will cover 10 lakh acres,” Mr. Pulla Rao said.

Help at hand for debt-ridden 600 horticulture farmers in Karnataka

Integrated plan to help them from seed to produce



The Integrated Horticulture Development project is aimed at improving the livelihood of farmers by linking them to the corporate sector with support from the government.

At a time when an estimated 600 debt-ridden farmers have committed suicide, shifting to horticultural crops is seen as a viable option by many.

The Integrated Horticulture Development (PPP-IHD) project launched by the government recently, which works on a public-private partnership model, is expected to help farmers who make the shift.

The project, according to Rajiv Chawla, secretary to the Horticulture Department, is aimed at improving the livelihood of these farmers by linking them to the private corporate sector with the support of the State government.

“The project helps in improving productivity, post-harvest management and value chains of major horticultural crops, besides improving the socio-economic status of farmers,” claimed Mr. Chawla.

Horticulture being a sunrise sector in Karnataka has achieved progress in the last one decade, where the area under horticultural crops has increased from

16.31-lakh hectares to 20.05-lakh hectares and production from 97.31-lakh tonnes to 169.4-lakh tonnes, according to figures made available by the department.

The PPP-IHD project would empower a group of horticulture farmers from seed to produce.

“Support will be extended in the form of good seed, fertilizers and pesticides. On the output side, farmers would get support in sorting, grading, cooling, and packaging, besides value addition to the produce,” Mr. Chawla said.

A private company or group of companies would be encouraged to provide all inputs and to buy outputs from the group of farmers under the project.

The State government would provide subsidy support as per the norms of department schemes, under various input components required as per the Detailed Project Report submitted by the company.

The project provides an opportunity for a qualified private company or a group of companies to come up with integrated horticultural projects across the State.

Cluster approach

The project would address the issue of farmers through cluster approach and utilise the Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), which are set up by the department.

Stating that the department had promoted 58 FPOs across the State during the year and planned to set up 34 more next year, Mr. Chawla said that these FPOs were to be registered under the Companies Act and comprised of about 1,000 farmers, mobilised as 50 Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) of 20 member each. These FPOs would enable the farmers to get improved

production technologies, conservation of ecosystem and effective marketing facilities, which results in enhancement of productivity and income, he said. The State government would provide support for infrastructural facilities of such FPOs at 90 per cent.

Water level crosses 50 ft. mark in Vaigai reservoir

Comfortable storage to help farmers of Theni, Dindigul, Madurai districts

In the wake of a steady discharge from Periyar dam, good flow in Vaigai and Kottakudi rivers and rains in catchment areas, water level crossed the 50-foot mark in Vaigai dam near here on Friday.

The inflow into the dam was 1,501 cusecs and the discharge being 60 cusecs.

The storage was 2,098 cusecs.

A comfortable storage in Vaigai dam is expected to help in meeting irrigation and drinking water needs of farmers and general public of Theni, Dindigul and Madurai districts.

Sothuparai dam has been overflowing for the past three days owing to showers on Kodaikanal hills and Periyakulam areas.

The water level in the dam was 126.8 feet.

This was the second time that the storage level touched its total capacity this year. It had surplussed in April owing to summer showers.

The storage level in Periyar dam is increasing steadily in the past one week.

The level stood at 127 feet. Inflow into the dam was 2,018 cusecs and only 511 cusecs were released.

The storage was 4,050 cusecs. The combined credit was 6,148 cusecs. As things stand, the Public Works Department will not find difficulty in discharging the required quantum of water for irrigation of standing crops in Theni, Madurai and Dindigul districts.

Manjalar dam is also full for the past one week.

There was no rain in Thekkadi and Periyar dam areas.

Dindigul

There were some showers in a few parts of Dindigul district on Friday. Majority of the dams in the district had less than half of their capacity.

Palar dam has 36.71 foot of water (total height 65 feet), Parappalar dam 70.36 feet (90 feet), Varadhamanadhi 61.35 feet (66.47 feet), Kudirayaru dam 46.26 feet (79.99 feet), Kudaganar dam 10.57 feet (27.07 feet), Nanjanjar dam 26.24 feet (39.37 feet) and Marudhanadhi dam 60.08 feet (64).

Eighty per cent of irrigation tanks and wells have very poor storage, said sources.

Food prices may rise

Ahead of the festive season, the bandh by the traders may further escalate the prices of food items.

A local trader said, “Unless the government intervenes and addresses the concerns of traders with a suitable decision, the APMCs will remain shut, affecting farmers and consumers as well.” At the time of going to the press, there was no news of any government intervention to persuade the traders for calling off the indefinite bandh.

Visiting poet with a gift of greens



Poet Sugathakumari being received with organic vegetables by the participants of an interaction session on classical language in Thiruvananthapuram. – Photo: C. Ratheesh kumar

Students of a few city schools on Friday reached Athani, the short-stay home for girls and women at Vanchiyoor here, to meet poet and environmental activist Sugathakumari carrying organic vegetables grown by them.

The occasion was the Malayalam Classical Day celebrations organised by the Information and Public Relations Department and the Sahithi Publications.

The children handed over vegetables such as drumstick leaves, brinjal, long beans, tomatoes, lady's fingers, plantain, and amaranthus to the poet.

What followed was over an hour-long interaction with Ms. Sugathakumari, in which she shared with the students the inspiration for the work done by her and some contemporary issues. Some students recited poems written by the poet.

Ms. Sugathakumari was honoured with a ponnada.

She told the students that the gift to her of vegetables grown by them in their schools and homes was invaluable. She regretted that despite the State being

blessed with so many resources, it had to depend on other States for vegetables, rice, and other food.

The children then asked a few questions to the poet. She urged the students to not only love nature but also to work for it and even wage war for it. They should learn as many languages as they could but there was nothing more important than their mother tongue.

On women's role in society, she said women should be bold, independent and courageous. Stressing on peaceful coexistence, she said one need not interfere in other people's beliefs and practices. At the same time, people should desist from provoking those who respected cows.

She said she did not want to return her Sahitya Akademi award in protest against the growing intolerance in the country, as it was presented to her by Umashankar Joshi and she valued it. If she returned it, it would merely be dumped somewhere.

Her words were her weapons, she said.

She would wield them to oppose politically the culture of violence that was gaining ground. She urged the children to write to the Chief Minister to seek his intervention in stopping reclamation of fields for building shopping malls, resorts and airports.

Prizes were also presented to the winners of the painting competition conducted at the Museum auditorium on November 1 in connection with the Malayalam Classical Day celebrations.

Junk food is not sinful?

We need to watch overall diet and do physical activity, says study

Is it time to indulge, going by the study findings?

Candy, soda and fast food, which are often painted as the prime culprits in the discussion of obesity, are not making Americans fat, says a new study. The Cornell University Food and Brand Lab study finds that intake of these foods is not related to body mass index in the average adult.



Researchers Just and Wansink reviewed a nationally representative sample of adults in the U.S. and found that consumption of soda, candy and fast food is not linked to the BMI for 95 per cent of the population.

Extremes are exceptions

The exception is those who are on the extreme ends of the BMI spectrum: those who are chronically underweight and those who are morbidly obese.

Given that there was no significant difference in consumption of these indulgent foods between overweight and healthy weight individuals, the researchers concluded that the overwhelming majority of weight problems are not caused by consumption of soda, candy and fast food alone.

Dr. David Just explained that this means that diets and health campaigns aimed at reducing and preventing obesity may be off track if they hinge on demonising specific foods.

He added, “If we want real change we need to look at the overall diet, and physical activity. Narrowly targeting junk foods is not just ineffective, it may be self-defeating as it distracts from the real underlying causes of obesity.” These findings suggest that clinicians and practitioners seeking to help individuals obtain a healthy weight should examine how overall consumption patterns, such as snacking and physical activity, influence weight instead of just eliminating “junk foods” from patient’s diets.

The study is published in *Obesity Science & Practice* .

Raids impact red gram prices



Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies, Dinesh Gundu Rao, says the government has started auctioning the seized red and Bengal gram

Minister of State for Food and Civil Supplies, Dinesh Gundu Rao, claimed that the decision to conduct raids and confiscate illegally stocked pulses, especially red gram, impacted the prices of red gram in the retail market.

Addressing a press conference here on Friday, Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao said that the government has started auctioning red gram and bengal gram which were hoarded.

In Kalaburagi, 900 quintals out of 2,800 quintals of red gram which were hoarded had been auctioned at Rs. 110 per kg.

The Minister said that instructions had been issued to Deputy Commissioners to verify the documents and dispose cases immediately.

The Minister said that in Kalaburagi, 1.11 lakh quintals of pulses were confiscated from different warehouses and godowns. Referring to the detection of a large section of the government employees holding BPL cards, Mr. Dinesh Gundu Rao said that a decision had been taken to collect the penalty from the erring employees for using the BPL cards for availing foodgrains at highly subsidised prices and no disciplinary action would be initiated against them.

He also said that 12,184 government employees were found to be holding the BPL cards unauthorisedly and all of them have seized and cancelled.

Every month the government will save Rs 46.5 crores after cancelling the unauthorised BPL cards.



A gadget that tells farmers how much urea to use on crops

The sensor-based equipment accurately measures the nitrogen content in leaves and immediately prompts the farmer by a voice message the exact quantity of urea needed.

The Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR) has developed a gadget to detect nitrogen intake by crops to enable farmers to use urea as required.

Called Express Nitrogen Guru (ENG), the sensor-based equipment accurately measures the nitrogen content in leaves and immediately prompts the farmer by a voice message the exact quantity of nitrogen (urea) needed. Currently in prototype stage, the gadget is said to be duly unveiled by Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at the forthcoming Agrovision farm expo here.

Farmers tend to use urea in excess, which leads to excessive vegetation. The leafy growth attracts many varieties of pests, including sucking pest and white fly, causing considerable damage. “The country pays heavily to subsidise urea to farmers, with the subsidy bill going up to Rs 1.25 lakh crore annually. The new gadget can help farmers use urea economically,” CICR Director Keshav Kranthi told [The Indian Express](#).

“The gadget would be of great use to wheat, rice and cotton farmers, who use urea the most. Urea use in cotton itself has gone up from 98 kg/ha/season 10 years ago to 22 kg/ha/season,” Kranthi said.

Currently, the Indian Agriculture Research Institute at Pusa has an equipment, Pusa soil test kit, which tests soil samples to determine the nutrient contents. “But different parts of the farm may have different nitrogen content. So, the Pusa kit has to check samples from different parts. But ENG takes a step ahead to check the actual intake of nitrogen by the plant. Moreover, it’s hand-held and is hence easy to carry,” Kranthi said.

“We have checked the results chemically in laboratory and they were found it to be precise.”

ENG has been developed by a young engineering graduate, Abhijit Majumdar, son of CICR scientist Gautam Majumdar. “The prototype takes photo of the leaf and using the shade card (as per the leaf’s colour) integrated in it measures the nitrogen content. Using a mathematical programme, it prompts through a voice message how much urea is needed by the plant,” Majumdar said. “When produced on a large scale, it could cost less than Rs 8,000,” he added.

hindustantimes

Tomato prices double in two weeks, could rise even further



The price of tomato at the APMC wholesale market in Vashi was Rs14 to Rs18 a kg on October 23. It has now soared to Rs24 to Rs28 a kg.

After onions and pulses, it is time for tomato prices to skyrocket.

The price of the popular vegetable has almost doubled in the past two weeks, and traders said it could rise further.

The price of tomato at the APMC wholesale market in Vashi was Rs14 to Rs18 a kg on October 23. It has now soared to Rs24 to Rs28 a kg. The retail market too has doubled the price — increasing it from Rs25 to Rs30 a kg to Rs50 to Rs60 a kg.

The rise in the price of the kitchen staple comes just a month after prices of pulses shot up in the first week of October to Rs150 a kg.

Rakesh Sahu, a wholesale trader at APMC, said: “The sudden unseasonal rain sometime ago has destroyed the crop. The tomato flowers that had bloomed were ruined. Farmers lost a lot of crop, and hence, the stocks have reduced by more than 60%.”

The situation is not expected to improve soon, Sahu said. “The next crop will arrive only after two months. So, prices could increase further. There could be some respite, if there are imports of good quality tomatoes from China.”

The effect of the price hike can be seen at the retail markets too.

Santosh Rawat, a Vashi retailer, said: “Our customers are upset at the price hike, but we are helpless. The cost is high at the wholesale market, so there is little we can do. We are still trying to keep prices as low as possible.”

Former APMC director Shankar Pingle said: “Usually, we get 70 to 80 trucks of tomatoes in the market. It has come down to around 30 to 40.”

Rajesh Yadav, a Vashi retailer, said: “The quality that we are getting is not very good. A lot of it rots early. We have to make up for the loss and hence have to hike the price.” He added, “The good quality produce is not much and is priced at over Rs60.” Yadav said: “The demand is bound to go up further during Diwali as the consumption increases. This means the price could rise by at least Rs10 to Rs20.”

Sheetal Kandhari, a homemaker in Vashi, said: “Onion, pulses and now tomato. The manner in vegetables prices are going up, we will have to give up eating them.”

In Mumbai, the retail price of tomato touched Rs50 a kg. “There is no supply from farmers. Prices are bound to increase,” said Prabhunand Singh, a vendor in Goregaon.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Union government to revise National Policy on Marine Fisheries: Union Agriculture minister

The union minister of agriculture and farmers welfare Radha Mohan Singh said that the government is the process of revising the National Policy on Marine Fisheries. A Committee under the chairmanship of DG, ICAR is seeking inputs from stakeholders for revising the National Policy on Marine Fisheries.

Singh was here on Friday to attend the inter-session meeting of the consultative committee on 'aquaculture development' held at the Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (IIVR). Speaking on the occasion, he said that aquaculture development has assumed significance in the present context to enhance fish production for ushering the Blue Revolution in the country for the socio-economic development and nutritional security.

He said that aquaculture constitutes one of the main components of fisheries sector in India and it is the fastest growing food producing sector in the world with a great potential to meet the food, especially protein requirement of a large number of population. Aquaculture production is playing an increasing role in meeting the demand for fish and fishery products. With an annual growth rate of above 7 per cent, India is the second largest producer of fish from aquaculture in the world. Fresh water aquaculture is a rural activity benefitting small and marginal farmers spread across the country and in view of the vast resources of the country, is also a major contributor in India's fish production. The species diversification in recent years has led to development of technology of breeding and hatchery management of several important species for fresh water aquaculture. Establishment of 'Brood bank' for commercially important species at Bhubaneswar by the

NFDB is expected to ensure production and supply of certified broods to hatcheries in the country.

The minister further said that the cage culture in reservoirs has picked up very well in recent years. The feasibility of inland saline aquaculture in Haryana, Punjab and Utter Pradesh has opened up awareness for bringing the land unfit for agricultural activity under aquaculture. The Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI) has standardized pen and cage farming for some species which offer vast potential for inland aquaculture in the country. It is expected that large scale adoption of the technologies of breeding and seed production by farmers across the country will lead to sustainable freshwater aquaculture as vital component of 'Blue Revolution' in the country.

He said that India has 5.4 million ha of inland water bodies for fresh water fish culture, 1.2 million ha for brackish water fish culture and 8.5 million ha for sea farming and a rich biodiversity to harness aquaculture farming in fresh, brackish and marine water bodies. Considering the vast potential, aquaculture needs to be developed further in a sustainable manner for economic prosperity, for empowerment of fishermen, to generate employment and for food and nutritional security, especially protein malnutrition, by introducing new technologies for responsible and sustainable utilization of resources in an eco friendly manner.

The minister also inaugurated the Farmers' Hostel and Training Centre situated in institute premise. In this hostel there is a facility for staying 60 farmers and 20 officers. He has also released the Hindi Patrika Sabji Kiran and a technical bulletin on Value Addition in Vegetables.

Agriculture department all geared up for pulling out farmers from agrarian crisis

Additional chief secretary (Development) Suresh Kumar today visited the office of chief agriculture officer and held a special meeting with the officials. He was also accompanied by Agriculture Commissioner Punjab Dr Balwinder Singh Sidhu and Director (Agriculture) Punjab Dr Gurdial Singh.

While addressing the officers of Agriculture department, he stressed on the need to give throttle to government schemes so that the farmers can be pulled out the present agrarian crisis. He also directed the officers to remain in touch with the farmers throughout the year and provide them technical knowhow so that they can reap huge profits from their crops.

Suresh Kumar also directed that like the wheat crop was damaged due to Karnal Bunt and other diseases last season that led to reduced yield, the officers should educate the farmers by holding awareness camps. He also directed them to keep advanced monitoring of diseases so that they could be checked in advance. He said that there would be no shortage of funds when it comes to implementing pro-farmer schemes of the Punjab government.

On the occasion, chief agriculture officer, Ludhiana, Dr Sukhpal Singh Sekhon appreciated the new policy of Punjab government in which seed of wheat crop is provided to farmers on subsidised rates. He said that this policy would help the farmers in a big way and assured that the distribution of wheat seed would be done in an honest and transparent manner. He also shared the plan in detail formed for the implementation of this policy in an impressive manner.

Agriculture Commissioner Punjab Dr Balwinder Singh Sidhu and Director (Agriculture) Punjab Dr Gurdial Singh also stated that the subsidy amount

for wheat seed would be deposited directly into the bank accounts of farmers in a transparent manner and it is getting good response from across the state.

Prominent among those present on the occasion included Dr Rajinderpal Singh Aulakh, ADO (Technical), Ludhiana, besides several others.

Nutritional Vitamin D improves vascular function: Study

Nutritional Vitamin D supplementation improves the vascular function and reduces inflammation in early stage of chronic kidney disease, a study has revealed.

It stated that no other medicine has proper effect in the inflammation of kidneys or any other problems related to it.

In a randomised controlled trial under direct supervision of the researchers, two ground were created of 60 patients each.

One group was given two doses of 300,000 units of Vitamin D for eight weeks while the patients in the other group were given matching placebo.

A placebo is anything that seems to be a "real" medical treatment -- but isn't. It could be a pill, a shot, or some other type of "fake" treatment.

The study was conducted by researchers from the George Institute for Global Health, New Delhi and the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER), Chandigarh.

It was presented at the American Society of Nephrology Kidney Week 2015 (November 3-8) in San Diego.

Several parameters of vascular function and biomarkers to measure status of inflammatory and immune activation were studied at baseline and after 16 weeks, Vitamin D levels increased in patients in the first treatment group whereas there was no change in the second group.

"About 70 percent of patients receiving Vitamin D demonstrated significant improvement in their vascular functions and improvement in biomarkers indicating reduction in the level of inflammatory and immune activation," said Vivekanand Jha, the executive director of the George Institute for Global Health who led the study.

Jha said that in the placebo arm only five percent patients showed improved vascular function and there was no change in the inflammatory and immune markers.

Vivek Kumar, nephrologist at PGIMER and the first author of the study, said: "Vitamin D deficiency is common in patients with chronic kidney disease. Our study shows that simply identifying and correcting this abnormality has the potential to improve the outcomes in these patients."

Jha added: "About one in 10 people suffer from chronic kidney disease around the world. Most of these patients are destined to develop premature cardiovascular disease, hence mitigation of this risk is an important therapeutic goal."

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Gram, jowar gain acreage in early rabi plantings

Sowing for the ongoing rabi season has begun in several States and crops such as gram and jowar have gained acreages in the early plantings, while that of main crops such as wheat and rapeseed-mustard are yet to pick up.

Acreage, so far, stood at 84 lakh hectares (lh), marginally lower than corresponding last year's 87.27 lh, according to the preliminary reports from the Ministry of Agriculture.



With prevailing high prices of pulses, farmers are seen showing their preference to plant gram or chana in the current season.

Pulse acreage

Acreage under chana stood at 22 lh as on November 6 – about 30 per cent more than last year's 16.82 lh.

States reporting higher acreage include Karnataka (8.49 lh), Maharashtra (5.16 lh), Andhra Pradesh (1.96 lh), Odisha (0.54 lh).

Traditional pulse-growing States such as Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh have reported lower acreage. Total acreage under rabi pulses is marginally lower at 28.65 lh (29.73 lh) on account of lower area under masur (lentil) and field pea.

Planting of wheat, the key cereal for the rabi season, is yet to begin on a full scale. States such as Karnataka and Maharashtra have reported higher area where farmers – who lost out on kharif crops in certain parts due to poor monsoon rainfall – have taken up early planting of the rabi crops. The recent spell of rains is seen aiding the sowing trend.

Wheat area up

In fact in Maharashtra, farmers have planted more of jowar during the ongoing rabi season boosting the total acreage under coarse cereals.

Total jowar acreage, so far, stood at 28.90 lh (18.72 lh). In Maharashtra, jowar acreage stood at 19.60 lh against the previous year's 11.63 lh. Similarly, in Karnataka, the jowar acreage was 8.02 lh (6.22 lh).

The acreage under rapeseed-mustard, the main rabi oilseed crop, is lower than last year. Mustard acreage, so far, stands at 15.13 lh against 28.45 lh in the corresponding period last year. This is mainly on account of lower acreages in States such as Rajasthan (5.29 lh), Haryana (2.87 lh) and Madhya Pradesh (1.57 lh).

Other rabi oilseed crops such as groundnut, safflower and sunflower have seen incremental acreage gains over corresponding last year. Total rabi oilseed acreage for the current season, so far, is lower at 19.91 lh (31.76 lh).

The government on Thursday announced a modest increase in minimum support prices for the rabi crops, while announcing an additional bonus for gram and masur.

Second cyclone in Arabian Sea; Bay may spin up its own

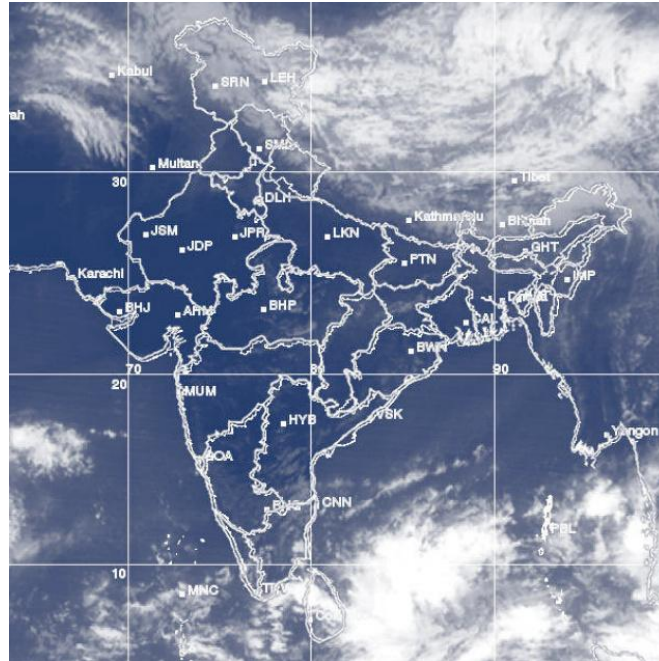
Close on the heels of the extremely severe cyclone 'Chapala' that crossed the Yemen coast, the Arabian Sea has on Friday rustled up a follow-up cyclone named 'Megh.'

An India Met Department update said that 'Megh' was located 840 km East-Northeast of Socotra Island off Yemen, 1,370 km West-Southwest of Mumbai, and 910 km East-Southeast of Salalah, Oman.

No threat here

'Megh' does not pose any threat to Indian coast and is currently travelling almost along the same line as 'Chapala' did earlier this week.

According to the Met, it will change course to West-Southwest and intensify into a severe cyclone and approach the Gulf of Eden and the Horn of Africa, weakening a round before making landfall.



Evolution of ‘Megh’ in quick succession after ‘Chapala’ is indicative of the considerable traction that the North-East monsoon has achieved over the Arabian Sea, the South Indian Peninsula, Sri Lanka and the Bay of Bengal.

According to most weather models, the Bay is readying to catch up with the action by setting up a storm of its own during the next few days.

The IMD expects a resident cyclonic circulation over South-West (off Sri Lanka) to make the grade as a low-pressure area as early as by Saturday.

Buzz in Bay

Over the next two days that follow, the ‘low’ will make its presence felt by rapidly intensifying into a depression/deep depression, or even beyond, before hitting the Tamil Nadu coast by Monday.

Some models suspect that Tamil Nadu might be bracing for a tryst with a full-scale cyclone, a view shared by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts and the US Climate Prediction Centre.

The US Centre is ‘moderately confident’ of tropical cyclone development across the Arabian Sea (‘Megh’ is already in the reckoning) and the Bay of Bengal.

Heavy rain outlook

What gives it the confidence is the enhanced convection (cloud formation) here and above average sea surface temperatures. The Global Forecast System ensemble run by the Centre also supports this view.

India Met Department weather outlook for the next few days is as follows:

Friday: Heavy rain at isolated places over Kerala. **Saturday:** Heavy rain at isolated places over Tamil Nadu. **Sunday:** Heavy rain at isolated places over Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Wintry conditions

Over North-West India, wintry conditions are settling down with the arrival of cool and wet western disturbances from across the international border. During the 24 hours ending Friday morning, rain or snow were reported from most places in Jammu and Kashmir, and isolated places in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Rain or thundershowers lashed the plains over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and West Uttar Pradesh.

SKM Eggs bags export excellence award

Erode-headquartered SKM Eggs has bagged the “Export Excellence Award” under 100 per cent EOU (Export Oriented Unit) category in Agro and Food sector. The award was given away in one stroke for two consecutive years (2012-13 and 2013-14).

Madras Export Processing Zone (MEPZ), Special Economic zone, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India recognized SKM Eggs as Best Exporters.

The company has the capacity to break 18 lakh eggs per day. “We have contracted with farmers for supply of eggs,” its Chief Executive Shivakumar told this correspondent adding “export of egg powder is mainly to Japan,

European countries and the Middle East. Only negligible volume is sold in the domestic market”.

The company clocked a turnover of Rs. 269.20 cr in 2014-15, up from Rs. 237.10 cr the earlier year.