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THE HINDU

Life-saving showers for crops in Prakasam

Low-lying areas in the city and other parts of the district, particularly southern Prakasam, were inundated following continuous downpour.

Moderate to heavy rain and thundershowers have been predicted across the district in the next 48 hours, bringing back smiles on the faces of farmers who could now go for cultivation of crops during Rabi season.

“The current spell of rain is life-rejuvenating for standing crops,” District Collector Sujatha Sharma said after taking stock of the situation with district officials.

Prolonged dry spell had given anxious moments to farmers in the district, as their crops had suffered moisture stress in the wake of drought-like situation in all the 56 mandals of the district, where farmers grow crops only during the last phase of the Khariff season and the early phase of Rabi season.

“The present spell of rain is useful to save the standing crops and go for fresh crops,” Agriculture Joint Director J. Muralikrishna said.

‘Boost production of pulses’

The Central government’s steps to control the spiralling prices of pulses may have brought a little respite to consumers, but these actions will provide only a temporarily relief; the need of the hour is to develop new varieties of pulses with higher yield so that people are not deprived of nutrition and farmers’ interests are protected, say agricultural experts.

There is an urgent need that government should push for technological advancement to increase the productivity of pulses. To improve and develop new varieties of pulses, huge investments in research and development is required to be made.

“Increasing the minimum support price (MSP) for pulses is not going to solve the problem. Until the country is made self-sufficient in its demand for pulses, this problem will persist,” said P.S. Rangî, advisor to the Punjab State Farmers’ Commission.

“We need to develop new high yielding varieties of pulses. The longer we depend on imports from other countries to fulfil our domestic demand, the problem of price rise will continue to haunt in future as well,” said Dr. Rangî.

Over the past month, people have witnessed a sharp increase in retail price of one of the most commonly consumed pulses, arhar (pigeon pea).

Foundation stone laid for ANGRAU at Lam

Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh, along with Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Venkaiah Naidu and Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, during the foundation ceremony for ANGRAU at Lam in Guntur district on Monday.

Giving a boost to aquaculture sector in the State, the Centre has sanctioned a Brooder Multiplication Centre for L. Vannanair shrimp for Andhra Pradesh, a Central Institute for Brackish-water Aquaculture (CIBA) regional office in Vijayawada and a Fishery Brood Bank. This was announced by Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmer Welfare Radha Mohan Singh here on Saturday.

The three institutes will boost the prospects of aquaculture along the coastal region of the State, enabling it to generate an annual income of Rs. 24,000 crore, the Minister said after laying the foundation stone for Acharya N.G Ranga Agricultural University on the premises of the Regional Agricultural Research Station here.

As of now, the local aquaculture industry is dependent on shrimp imports.

The Minister said the Centre had released Rs. 85 crore for ANGRAU, adding that he would consider Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's request to allot Rs. 1,500 crore for setting up the university. Union Minister for Urban Development M. Venkaiah Naidu, Union Minister of State for Science and Technology Y.S. Chowdary and Minister for Civil Aviation Ashok Gajapathi Raju were present on the occasion.

Boost production of pulses, says expert



Costlier pulses will affect nutrition levels of the poor, says P.S. Ranghi.

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Over the past month, people in India have witnessed a sharp increase in the retail price of one of the most commonly consumed pulses, arhar (pigeon pea), which had risen to as high as Rs.200 per kg in the metro cities. Besides, the prices of other pulses such as urad (black gram), moong (green gram) and masoor (red lentils) had also risen sharply.

The extraordinary increase in the prices of pulses invited sharp criticism of the government, which later swung into action and took a number of steps, including imposition of stock limits on pulses, raids on hoarders and sale of subsidised pulses through government outlets in a bid to control the prices.

“These measures can only bring a temporary relief and moreover, in a country like India where pulses are a major source of protein, particularly for the poor, such a huge rise in pulses prices could be dangerous for nutritional standards in the country,” said Dr. Rangji, adding that the overall yield of pulses in India is far lower than the world level of 910 kg per hectare, and to increase this, a big push in research and development was required.

The Centre has said that till November 12, over 4,660 tonnes of pulses that were seized have been auctioned or disposed of through other options in markets, which will moderate the prices further.

“So far, 12,506 raids have been conducted across various States and 1,33,828.31 tonnes of pulses have been seized,” said an official spokesperson for the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

G20 nations narrow differences on climate change

Agreement reached to implement all elements of the Bali Package

The world's largest economies narrowed their differences over the stand on climate change ahead of the COP 21 talks in Paris that start at the end of this month.



After “intense” negotiations that ran into the morning hours of Monday on the key issue of whether to mention the aim to limit the rise in global warming to 2 degrees, they included the two-degree-goal in the G20 communique.

The final text did not specify the target deadline for the phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies, taking care of a major concern for Indian negotiators.

“India has done a lot by phasing out subsidies on petrol and diesel but those on fertilisers and power are a politically sensitive issue,” Niti Aayog Vice-Chairman and Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s G20 Sherpa Arvind Panagariya briefed presspersons just before the release of the G20 communique.

India’s concerns

The communique also reflected India’s concerns on the Doha Round of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). “We are committed to working together for a successful Nairobi Ministerial Meeting that has a balanced set of outcomes, including on the Doha Development Agenda and provides clear guidance to post-Nairobi work,” it said.

The G20 agreed, as sought by India, to increase efforts to implement all elements of the Bali Package, including those on agriculture, development,

public stockholding as well as the prompt ratification and implementation of the Trade Facilitation agreements.

On regional and plurilateral trade agreements, on which India in its intervention had raised concerns, the communique said the G20's efforts will be ensure these agreements are transparent and inclusive.

Deep disappointment

The G20 expressed deep disappointment with the continued delay in implementing the IMF quota and governance reforms agreed in 2010 and urged the U.S. to ratify the reforms as soon as possible.

It also asked the IMF to complete work on an interim solution that will “meaningfully converge quota shares as soon as and to the extent possible to the levels agreed under the 14th General Review of Quotas.”

Paddy purchase gathers speed

With the kharif paddy harvest season still in a nascent stage in most parts of East Godavari district, the paddy procurement centres set up by the administration have procured 155 tonnes from farmers so far.

Crop cutting is normally at its peak at this time of the year, but with rains being delayed this year, farmers are only now commencing harvest operations. In the wake of changes made to the paddy procurement policy by the government, the administration initially planned to set up 300 centres in East Godavari district to purchase paddy from farmers as per the MSP announced by the government.

*As of now, 272 paddy procurement centres are functioning in different parts of the district, and 155 tonnes of paddy has already been procured
H. Arun Kumar Collector, E.G. dist.*

East Godavari Collector H. Arun Kumar says 272 paddy procurement centres are functioning in different parts of the district and 155 tonnes of paddy has already been procured

Rain pushes up prices of vegetables



A view of vegetables at the market in Tiruchi.

Prices of vegetables in the wholesale markets across the district have registered a steep rise in the past couple of days following heavy showers the district since the last one week.

Prices of most vegetables have almost doubled since Sunday with a drop in arrivals from a cluster of villages noted for vegetable production.

S. M. Yusuf Ali, member of the Gandhi Market All-vegetable Wholesale Commission Mandy Merchants Association, said the price (per kg) of lady's finger has shot up to Rs.35 from last week's Rs.15; the price of snake gourd stood at Rs.20 against Rs.5 last week; brinjal price has shot up from Rs. 10 to Rs. 30 while the price of beans has doubled from Rs. 20 to Rs. 40.

The prices of tomato have not only shot up but also its quality has come down in the wake of the rain. Mr. Ali said that against Rs. 30 per kg during pre-Deepavali period, its price now stood at Rs.50. It would take a couple of weeks for prices to come down as horticultural plants needed at least a week's time to resume flowering after the showers.

N. Anbu, a wholesale dealer of vegetables at Vaiyampatti said that the continuous rains had affected the flowering of horticultural crops.

Most hit are the farmers raising snake gourds, brinjal and beans. He said that vegetables are grown in a cluster of villages including Tharagampatti, Paalaviduthi, Kadavur, Idayapatti, Nadupatti, Kalpatti, Maniyampatti, Karungulam, Seethampatti, Anaikarapatti, Servaikaranpatti, Paalapatti and Kovilpatti.

The price of brinjal has increased from Rs.20 last Tuesday to Rs. 70 on Monday. The only solace is that there has been a lull in the showers indicating that the horticultural crops would survive in course of time.

Water released from dams



FOR THE crops:Water being released from Karuppanadhi dam in Tirunelveli district on Monday.

Collector M. Karunakaran released water from four dams on Monday for 'pisanam' paddy crop raised on 32,024 acres in western Tirunelveli.

Dr. Karunakaran released water from Karuppanadhi, Gadana, Ramanadhi and Adavinainar dams in the presence of Rajya Sabha MPs S. Muthukaruppan and Vijila Sathyananth.

Speaking on the occasion, the Collector said that 25 cusecs of water from Karuppanadhi, 125 cusecs from Gadana, 60 cusecs from Ramanadhi and 100 cusecs from Adavinainar dams was being discharged and the release would be sustained till March 31, 2016.

“If inflow into these dams increases with more rains in catchment areas, the quantum of release will be sustained as such or else turn system will be followed. Hence, farmers should use the water judiciously,” the Collector said.

S. Venkatesh, Revenue Divisional Officer, Tenkasi, and A. Kaliraj, Executive Engineer, Public Works Department, were present.

Ramanathapuram district looks up to the sky

Monsoon has so far been unkind to this arid district



The Big Tank near Ramanathapuram remaining dry on Monday.

When several parts of Tamil Nadu are deluged by heavy rains, the northeast monsoon has so far been unkind to this arid district as it has received an average of 312 mm of rainfall till Monday with daily average rainfall still in the normal since November 1.

After a delayed start on October 28, the monsoon has not been active as the district witnessed only intermittent rains with the daily average staggering in the range of 10 to 17 mm though the coastal Rameswaram, Pamban, Thangachimadam, Thondi and Valinokkam received heavy rains.

In the last three days, after the meteorological department predicted widespread rainfall in the coastal and interior districts in the wake of a new weather system, the district, which had been yearning for good rains, received a paltry average of 7 mm as on November 14 and 16 mm and 17mm on subsequent days.

Unwilling to take any risk, the district administration geared up to meet any eventuality in the event of heavy rains and opened 37 reception centres to accommodate people in the event of their evacuation from flood-affected and low-lying areas.

The normal rainfall, however, brought cheers to the farmers, who had cultivated paddy in about 1.13 lakh hectares.

As the monsoon did not set in on the expected date of September 23, they delayed direct sowing and the crops were 15 to 30 days old now though they should have reached the flowering stage, official sources said.

“The crops are in good stage and the rains so far are useful to the crops,” the sources said adding the farmers had been instructed to be wary of pest and diseases hitting the crops due to overcast skies and advised to take necessary steps.

The farmers had dug up more than 2,000 farm ponds across the district to store rain water and use them as and when required but most of the ponds were empty, the sources said.

The 1,694 tanks, including the Big Tank, Sakkarakottai tank and RS Mangalam tank too had very little water, they said.

The daily average rainfall stood at single digit in the drought prone Kamudhi, Mudukulathur and Ramanathapuram, the sources added.

Good flow to major tanks in Perambalur

Inflow to tanks has come as a relief to farmers; district records moderate rainfall on Sunday

A view of Pandagapadi tank in Perambalur district which is fast filling up.

The spell of monsoon has brought good inflow to some of the major tanks in the district including the Arumbavur big tank, one of the biggest tanks in the district.

According to sources in the Public Works Department, the Arumbavur, Vadakkalur and Venbavur tanks in the district have filled up out of a total 73 tanks under the control of the Maruthaiyar Sub Division of the PWD.

The Arumbavur big tank has a capacity of 52 million cubic feet (mcft) while the Vadakkalur and Venbavur tanks have a capacity of 3.8 mcft and one mcft respectively.

With the filling up of the Arumbavur big tank, water is now flowing to the Arumbavur small tank, PWD sources said.

The Ladapuram Big Tank, which is another major tank with a capacity of 65 mcft, and Kurumbalur tank (10 mcft) have more than 75 per cent storage.

The Vengalam Small Tank, Pandagapadi, Ayikudi, Perambalur Small, Vadakkalur Agraharam and Elambalur tanks have 50 per cent storage, the sources said.

The inflow to the some of these tanks has come as a relief to farmers of the district. However, PWD officials said that the remaining tanks in the district had less than 50 per cent storage and more rains were required to fill them.

The district received moderate rainfall on Sunday with Veppanthattai and Thazhuthalai recording 35 mm of rainfall each during the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 a.m. on Monday.

The rainfall recorded in other parts of the district during the same period was (in mm): Perambalur 32; Chettikulam 22 and Padalur 21.

The district received an average of 29 mm of rainfall.

Meanwhile, Collector Darez Ahamed said all precautionary arrangements have been made in view of the monsoon in the district.

Nodal officers have been nominated for all parts of the district to maintain a vigil. Measures have been initiated to prevent any outbreak of disease, he said.

Hyderabad will soon be ringed by nature parks

Morning walkers at the KBR Park in Banjara Hills in Hyderabad.

The city could be surrounded by a garland of green spaces in the coming days, offering ample space, abundant fresh air, and opportunity to shed those extra kilos, for hobbyists, walkers and residents in the proximity.

In the coming six months, the Forest Department is planning to launch about 10 nature parks at various locations on the city fringes, for visitors, children, trekkers and bicyclers. This is in line with Telangana Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao's instructions for development of lung spaces for urban dwellers, officials from the department said.

30 forest blocks

While the parks will function much in the same way as the Kasu Brahmananda Reddy National Park, with restricted entry and nominal fee, national park status will not be obtained for the new ones, as it could delay the future development projects, they said. There are about 30 forest blocks in city's proximity.

Already, two such parks, namely, 'Bhagyanagar Nandanavanam' in Narepally on the Warangal highway, and 'Sanjeevini Vanam' in Gurranguda have been thrown open to the public.

Locations where the rest of the parks could be coming up include Domnair, Gundiguda, Kandlakoya, Dulapally, Vanasthalipuram, Bowrampet, Gajularamaram, Nagaram, Turkayamjal, Medchal, and Suraram. Area of each park could range between 100 acres and 700 acres.

Part of the ‘Mahaveer Harina Vanasthali National Park’ at the Vanasthalipuram and the forest land at Dulapally will be used to develop nature parks there.

Something for everyone

Natural vegetation already existing in the blocks will be encouraged, and fenced off with a compound wall. An earthen walking track and another track for cycling will be laid along the wall inside, besides landscaping at the entrance. Rest-shelters, bench-seating, drinking water, and wash-room facilities will be provided, apart from sign-boards and labelling of trees. Each park will have an education centre with library, auditorium and interpretation hall, and a nature camp shed for children and Yoga enthusiasts, the official said.

“Allowing people into these spaces will increase the sense of responsibility and control encroachments, as witnessed in the case of KBR Park,” the official said.

Tentative launch of the park at Domnair is scheduled in December, while the same for the one at Dulapally is in January next year. Nagaram and Kandlakoya parks could be launched in February next. One park in Gurramguda could be launched in a month, while the second is scheduled for March 2016.

The park at Vanasthalipuram too may be launched in three months.

Other than these parks, five forest blocks within three km from the Outer Ring Road, respectively at Eliminedu, Guttala Kancha, Kongarakhurd, Kongara Kalan and Saaloni Dibba, will be developed as adventure sports locations for youth.

An action plan with a project cost of Rs. 47 crore has been prepared for all these projects.

Birds play weather forecasters



The great frigate, a pelagic sea bird, was spotted recently at Mudaliarkuppam — another indicator of the rain. Cyclonic currents blow these birds inland

Birds are capable of predicting rains. They showed they could, this time too.

Birder K. Gnanaskandan of Madras Naturalists' Society said that until a couple of weeks ago, about 3,000 flamingoes were spotted at Annamalaicheri near Pulicat. “But they’ve all flown away. Not even a single flamingo can be seen there now. Perhaps they’ve moved to SHAR Road in Sriharikota, away from the coast,” he says. They sensed what was coming, he adds.

The great frigate, a pelagic bird was spotted recently at Mudaliarkuppam — another indicator. What was a sea bird doing here? “Cyclonic currents blow pelagic birds inland,” says Gnanaskandan. The dark-sided flycatcher was spotted four days ago in Avadi. Gnanaskandan says that the same species was seen some four years ago in Besant Nagar. The weather then was exactly how it is now — Chennai was battered by heavy rains.

S. Balpandi, a bird expert and resident of Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary, near Tirunelveli, says that plenty of migratory birds have arrived in Koonthankulam this year.

“They know much ahead of time of a good monsoon and plan their journeys accordingly,” he says. K. Mohan Raj, a birder based in Coimbatore, says that the koel sings its most beautiful songs ahead of a rain. “One of naturalist M. Krishnan’s books even bears the title Mazhai Kaalamum Kuil Osaiyum (Rain and the song of the koel),” he points out.

Insects too can sense rain. Naturalist ‘Poochi’ Venkat says that the most common indicators of rain are dragon flies.

“When there’s a drop in pressure and the air is humid, dragon flies can be seen hovering in swarms. This is a sure shot sign that there will be rainfall right there,” he says.

Beetles and red velvet mites can be seen wriggling from beneath the soil and onto the surface during the wet season.

“This happens when the water table level goes beyond what is considered the safe limit,” he explains. Birds swoop down to eat these insects. “This is a beautiful cycle,” adds Venkat.

The great frigate, a pelagic sea bird, was spotted recently at Mudaliarkuppam — another indicator of the rain. Cyclonic currents blow these birds inland

Aavin milk supply affected

Following the heavy rain, supply of Aavin milk to several areas of the city was affected on Monday. While it was delayed in some places, residents in a few localities complained that they did not get their supply at all.

Sources in Aavin said that despite waist-deep water-logging in one of its dairies, milk was despatched at the usual time. However, water logging all

along the supply points delayed the delivery of milk. S. A. Ponnusamy, State President, Tamil Nadu Milk Retailers Welfare Association said though there was heavy water logging on many roads, vendors and retailers managed to supply milk to consumers, though it was slightly delayed.

V. Chandrasekhar of Besant Nagar said the government should recognise the commitment of field staff of Aavin, who ensure milk supply even during crisis situations like the monsoon.

Madurai receives scanty rainfall

Madurai has remained a rain-shadow region in the last few days. It has received negligible amount of rainfall in the last six days, even as deep depressions over the Bay of Bengal have wreaked havoc in northern districts, including Chennai.

The total amount of rainfall the district has received since November 10 – Deepavali day – is a meagre 18.07 mm.

The highest amount of rainfall during these days was registered on Saturday when all the average rainfall reported in the 20 rain gauge stations was 6.12 mm. Incidentally, November 10 did not have any rainfall at all.

Low storage

Meanwhile, official sources said that except for the handful number of tanks, hundreds of tanks in the district did not have significant storage. Some of the tanks in Tirumangalam, Peraiyur and Melur taluks had water to their full capacity.

While the district administration has geared up to face any eventuality during the deep depression period, water managers still have their fingers crossed waiting for a good downpour to fill up the tanks, not only for irrigation purpose, but also to recharge groundwater level.

However, the dark clouds and the strong drizzle along with intermittent showers on Monday evening brightened the hope of farmers for an early release of water from Vaigai dam for irrigation.

Rain disrupts life in Kodaikanal

Even as most of the southern districts had a respite from rain for the second day on Monday, Madurai and surrounding areas witnessed heavy downpour during the evening.

At Kodaikanal town, the movement of vehicles was disrupted for more than three hours as a tree fell on Lake Road snapping power cables.

Power supply hit

Power supply was disrupted in and around the lake in Kodaikanal and intermittent showers paralysed life in the town and villages on upper Kodaikanal hill in the last 48 hours.

The police advised drivers to switch on head lights to alert vehicles coming in the opposite direction as mist and rain gave a tough time to drivers on Kodaikanal - Batlagundu ghat road. A minor landslip affected connectivity to Vada Kaunji and nearby areas.

A 10-member police team is camping at Perumal Malai to assist workers in removing debris and regulating traffic on the ghat road.

Meanwhile, the monsoon has so far been unkind to the arid Ramanathapuram district which received an average of 312 mm rainfall till Monday. After arriving late on October 28, the monsoon has not been active in the district. It received an average of 7 mm on November 14 and 16 mm and 17 mm on subsequent days.

Residents of Tuticorin taluk, who were displaced by inundation, started moving back to their dwellings on Monday.

The number of relief camps for displaced people was brought down to eight from 13. The district has already surpassed the average of 184 mm in November. However, it is still short of the annual rainfall by 74 mm.

At Tirunelveli, the Corporation deployed a medical team at the new bus stand to screen passengers in the wake of viral fever outbreak.

Monsoon has so far been unkind to arid Ramanathapuram district

Live demo of ‘diabetes-friendly’ food



Visitors view ‘diabetes-friendly’ food through a live demonstration at the Indira Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute, Kathirkamam, on Monday —Photo: S.S. Kumar

(Clockwise from top) Cereals, pulses, legumes, vegetables and fruits which can be consumed by diabetic patients; (left) food items which must not be consumed on display as part of World Diabetes Day on Monday —Photos: S.S. Kumar



As part of World Diabetes Day, hospital gives visitors an overview of food items for patients' diet

While health professionals have for long stressed the importance of diet in the control of diabetes, patients and caretakers are often confronted with lack of accurate information on food choices. With the theme for the World Diabetes Day (November 14) this year being 'healthy eating', a team from the Indira Gandhi Medical College and Research Institute, Kathirkamam, offered people a chance to view firsthand high and low glycemic index food items or 'diabetes-friendly' food through a live demonstration at the hospital on Monday.

The demonstration, an Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activity organised by the Department of Community Medicine, IGMC&RI helped visitors clear their doubts with the team of doctors and interns. People were seen taking photographs of the display for future reference.

What to consume and what to avoid

There was a display of food materials which can be consumed by diabetic patients under cereals, pulses, legumes, vegetables, fruits and fats.

This included oats, barley, green peas, red millet (ragi) vermicelli, horse gram, dark millet, fenugreek, brown chickpeas, samba wheat, carrot, broccoli, beans, cucumber, brinjal, drumstick, bitter gourd, palak, peas, beans, lady's finger, guava, papaya, orange, pomegranate and apple.

Among food items to be avoided by diabetic patients was a display of potato, beetroot, vada, chips, cake, corn, grapes, banana and noodles. The team also gave suggestions on recipes which can be made using the raw materials.

The team also put up charts which included information on calories per regular activities, as well as ideal diets for diabetic patients for breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner, and the time at which meals must be taken.

“There are often misconceptions about which food can be consumed and which cannot. For instance, there are multiple varieties of breads available. White and broken wheat breads have up to 80 percent maida flour which is converted into sugar. Thus diabetic patients must stick to whole wheat bread,” said Dr. Chavada V.K., Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine. He added that sweetened dates must be avoided.

“There must be a gap of six hours between each meal. For breakfast, it is ideal to consume 35 percent proteins, 35 percent carbohydrates and 30 percent fruits. For lunch and dinner, the diet should consist of 50 percent vegetables, 25 percent carbohydrates and 25 percent proteins,” said Mohammad Safwan, one of the interns on the team. It is ideal to alternate cooking oils, added Mr. Safwan.

Diet, exercise and stress management

“Normalisation of sugar levels is seldom achieved with treatment alone. Intervention through diet, exercise and stress management is necessary for controlling diabetes,” said Dr. Chavada V.K., Associate Professor, Department of Community Medicine.

In the case of Non Communicable Diseases like diabetes, people have the option of controlling and preventing them, said Dr. Chavada.

A Continuing Medical Education Programme on ‘Non-Pharmacological Approach for Diabetes Mellitus’ addressed the issue of how many calories a person requires, yoga and exercises for diabetes and ‘burden of disease’. The sessions were led by Dr. Kavita Vasudevan, Head, Department of Community Medicine, Dr. Chavada and a team from Auroville.

Mookaneri Lake filling up



Mookaneri lake near Salem city is fast filling up.

The Mookaneri lake, a major water body of the district, has been fast filling up thanks to the widespread rainfall received in the Yercaud hill station.

The rain water from the hills reached the Puthu Yeri.

The surplussing water of Puthu Yeri reached Mookaneri lake through the Kothukaran Odai.

The Mookaneri lake was remaining dry for the last five years and copious inflow of water has brought much cheer to both the city residents and the farmers alike.

The officials are involved in the work of cleaning the waterways to ensure the free flow of water in case of Mookaneri lake overflows.

The Mookaneri lake all of a sudden has become a picnic spot.

The local residents have started visiting the lake in cars and two-wheelers along with their family members to have a glimpse of the lake. They also visited the Puthu Yeri.

Many prefer to take a selfie with the lake in background.

With Sunday being a holiday, there was heavy rush of vehicles at the Mookanery lake and the Kannankurichi police rushed to spot and regulated the crowd.

People continued to visit and have a glimpse of the water filled lake on Monday too.

Water level in Mettur Dam

The water level in the Mettu Dam rose to 84.55 ft on Monday evening against its full level of 120 ft. The inflow of water into the dam was 8,023 cusecs, and the discharge for farm activities in Delta region was 500 cusecs.

Butterfly survey records 178 species in Wayanad



A butterfly survey concluded in the North Wayanad region on Sunday reported the sighting of 178 species, including nine endemic to Western Ghats region. The first time sighting of Sahyadri banded tail was also recorded during the survey.

The three-day survey was organised jointly by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) and the Forest and Wildlife Department at three forest ranges under the North Wayanad forest division and each forest range under Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary and South Wayanad forest division. The survey was mainly aimed at assessing the butterfly diversity in the forest areas of the region, a vulnerable region to climatic changes. It was also aimed at assessing the availability of nectar plant and larval host plant, essential for the survival of butterflies. Six researchers, Muhammed Jaffer Palot, Senior Scientist, Zoological Survey of India; Balakrishnan Valappil; Saji; Chandrashekharan Koyilandi; V.C. Balakrishnan; and Pavithran Vadakara; and 75 butterfly enthusiasts, including students, took part in the survey. The team reported 43 species of skippers, 44 species of blues, 15 species of swallow tails, 19 white and yellows, and 57 species of brush-footed butterflies, A.T. Sudheesh, KSBB coordinator of the survey, and P.A. Ajayan, district coordinator, KSBB, said. Rare species such as Danaid egg fly, Crimson rose and Malabar banded swallow tail were sighted at Mattilayam forest under Mananthavady forest range, Periya under Periya forest range and Kuruva island under Chethalayath forest range respectively. The sighting of 178 species of butterflies is an evidence of a healthy butterfly habitat in the region, but the degradation of riparian forest in many part of the region may adversely affect the butterfly habitat in the near future, V.C. Balakrishnan of the Society for Environment Education in Kerala (SEEK) said.

Plan to plant one lakh saplings in a day

The East Godavari district administration is chalking out plans to undertake plantation of one lakh saplings to mark the 'Karthika Vanamahotsavam,' besides developing nurseries in 142 government-run schools all over the district from November 25.

The target was to complete plantation of one lakh saplings in single day. To reach this, officials of various departments are on the job identifying vacant lands in various parts of the district. The Social Forestry Wing of the Forest Department is ready to provide the saplings and plans are afoot to involve educational institutions and service organisations in the plantation drive.

Reviewing the arrangements with the officials of different departments here on Monday, District Collector H. Arun Kumar said that 142 schools had already been identified by the Education Department, where land and water were available to develop nurseries and the programme would be launched on a par with the ‘Karthika Vanamahotsavam.’

He said that the nurseries would be grown under the MGNREGS.

\$ 75-m WB loan for rural inclusive growth project

The project specifically supports in increasing the income of 2.5 lakh small and marginal farmers by at least 50 per cent enhancing their productivity and improving access to markets.

This component would work with those small and marginal farmers who had built up productive assets and had potential to exploit growth opportunities for high value commodities like red gram, milk, poultry, small ruminants, fisheries, turmeric, cashew and coffee. It would also work towards improving the coverage and delivery of social protection entitlements for five lakh poorest households.

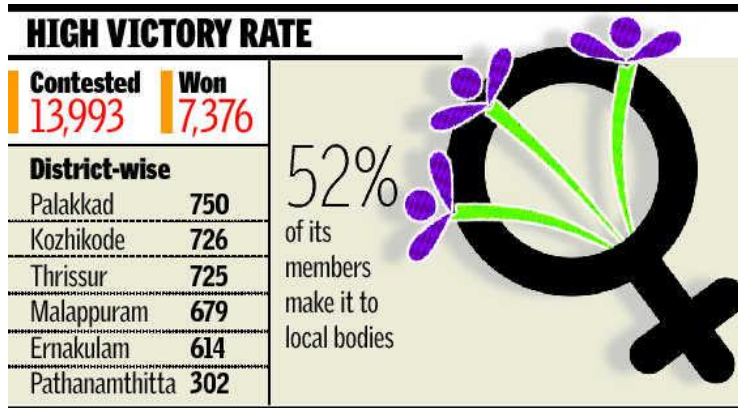
According to the agreement, the project would focus on increasing opportunities for farmers especially from SC and ST in 150 most backward mandals. Investments would be made in developing network of social enterprises for food, nutrition, sanitation and other social enterprises.

It's Kudumbasree who is the real winner

The current election season witnessed the SHGs evolving as the short key to success as all political parties picked candidates from the pool. The elected women also include 18 master trainers of the Mission.

Kudumbasree has emerged as the real winner in the local body elections with 52 per cent of its representatives winning the poll battles across the State.

Of 13,993 members of the women self-help groups (SHGs) who contested this time, 7,376 won, marking the highest ever victory rate for the group. Five years ago, the victory rate was 41 per cent. That time, around 8,000 candidates from the pool contested the election.



The current election season witnessed the SHGs evolving as the short key to success as all political parties picked candidates from the pool. The elected women also include 18 master trainers of the Mission.

It was Palakkad which send the maximum number of SHG candidates as 750 candidates were elected from here followed by Kozhikode (726), Thrissur (725), Malappuram (679), and Ernakulam (614). Eleven representatives of Kudumbasree made it to the Kochi Corporation council. Pathanamthitta district gave least preference to the trained women folk as it elected only 302 members of Kudumbasree.

During the previous election, Kudumbashree members who were holding the posts of chairperson and vice chair persons of the Community Development Society and Area Development Society and the president, vice president, and secretary posts of neighbourhood groups had to resign from these positions to contest the election. However, this year, mission obtained special permission from the Kerala State Election Commission for its members so that only those who were elected had to resign.

The increased acceptance of the Kudumbashree members among all the political parties should be viewed as the political empowerment achieved by

the women's group, said T. Shahul Hameed, State Mission Officer, Kudumbashree Mission.



Climate change: States must focus on risk management in agriculture



This year is turning out to be a milestone year for the world's future: In September, 192 countries signed the Sustainable Development Goals and on November 30, delegates from 195 countries will converge in Paris for 12 days to hammer out a new global climate accord. There are several cross-cutting issues between the two mega meets, climate change and agriculture being the two big ones.

It is a no-brainer why the impact of climate change on agriculture is significant: While all economic activities experience hazards from nature, agriculture is one of the riskiest and climate change is becoming a source of significant additional risks for agriculture and food systems. In fact, in the last 40 years, the impact of climate change on agriculture has been significant and going forward, it will increasingly become tougher.

A [World Bank paper](#) says that each degree Celsius of global warming is projected to lead to an overall yield loss of about 5%. As climate change progresses, it is increasingly likely that current systems will no longer be viable in many locations. This is a serious warning for the world, particularly India, since figures show that the country will have 1.5 billion mouths to feed by 2030.

The World Bank paper rightly advises focusing more on risk management in agriculture. There are already examples of such work: The International Rice Research Institute in collaboration with advanced US research labs, the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, state agricultural universities, and the ministry of science and technology's department of biotechnology have spearheaded plant breeding to develop strains of rice that are resistant to effects of climate change, like flash flood, stagnant flooding, salinity, and drought.

Just think how much farmers in Bundelkhand and Maharashtra today would have benefited if they had access to drought-resistant crops. Investing in climate-resilient agriculture has several downstream effects: It can stem migration, improve rural demand and ensure food security. The farmers, however, not only need access to climate-resistant varieties across agrarian products, but such interventions have to reach them before a natural disaster actually strikes.

Bumper paddy yield cheers up beleaguered farmers

There is good news for farmers of Punjab who were hit by crop failure in the previous kharif and rabi seasons. Paddy procurement for the central pool has touched 135 lakh tonnes, among the highest in recent years, even as crop arrivals are continuing in mandis across the state. About 10 lakh tonnes of paddy is awaiting procurement in mandis.

Till November 15 last year, about 115 lakh tonnes of paddy had been procured, while the total procurement was 118 lakh tonnes.



State farmers' commission consultant PS Rangi said, "It was in 1996 when paddy procurement touched an all-time high of more than 150 lakh tonnes and Punjab contributed 100 lakh tonnes to the central pool. Farmers have suffered a lot due to the failure of cotton, potato, wheat, maize and sugarcane crops, but paddy has given them a reason to smile." He added that though it was a drought-hit kharif season, input costs had come down due to regular supply of power to farmers and they didn't have to use diesel to run tubewells.

As per an estimate by the commission, the per-acre yield has touched 35-36 quintals, which means a gross income of Rs 50,000 for the farmer. Farmers are being offered an minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 1,450 per quintal for paddy.

Commissioner, agriculture, Balwinder Singh Sidhu said it was indeed good news for farmers who had witnessed repeated crop failure since the past year.

Sidhu added that the paddy arrivals had considerable quantity of basmati varieties which failed to fetch a good price in the open market and were

purchased along with coarse-variety paddy at the MSP. Of the 28 lakh hectares under paddy cultivation this season, 8 lakh were under basmati.

The total arrivals include 10-12 lakh tonnes of basmati, especially the 1509 variety. This season, the 1509 variety could not fetch more than Rs 1,000 per quintal, even though in previous crop seasons, the prices had touched Rs 3,500-4,000 per quintal.

“Due to drought across the country, paddy production has considerably gone down, but Punjab has managed a good yield. The state continues to play an important role in the country’s food security,” said Rangi.

Figures that matter

135 lakh tonnes Paddy procured for central pool this season (till November 15)

115 lakh tonnes Procurement till corresponding date last season

150 lakh tonnes Procurement in 1996 season (all-time high)

Govt finalises ‘simpler and easy-to-settle’ farm insurance policy

The Modi government is finalising a new farm insurance policy with lower premiums and simpler norms for prompt payments, a move aimed at finding a more lasting solution for increasing climate shocks such as droughts.

Hoping to ameliorate a farm crisis and quell criticism that it is paying more attention to industrialisation, the whole point of a new farm insurance policy is to make it “simpler and easy to settle”, an official said, requesting anonymity.

Less than a quarter of India’s farmers insure their crops under three state-bankrolled policies, which are cumbersome and archaic. A back-to-back

drought in half the country this summer has shrunk farm incomes and stoked a rural crisis, posing a political challenge for the government.

Farm insurance and compensation has been a complicated process that often relies on estimates of crop losses in a cluster of villages, rather than individual farms. Doles often go to absentee landlords, rather than sharecroppers and farm tenants. “All these aspects are being looked into,” the official said.

Under the draft proposal, premium is aimed to be brought down to 3% from the current levels between 3.5% and 8%. The insurance scheme will be tied to agro-climatic and land conditions – such as hilly, rain-fed and irrigated – that determine farm output, rather than just crop value.

For certain vulnerable categories of farmers, the government will propose to cap the premium at a certain level. The Modi government’s proposal, which will come up for the Cabinet’s approval, may require certain categories of farmers who take farm loans – and are thus ‘risk-taking’ – to compulsorily buy insurance, the official said.

As droughts or untimely rains become frequent, farm incomes have little protection in a country where agriculture supports half of the population. Many farmers exposed to risks commit suicide.

“The objective is to make it hassle-free. If it’s not hassle-free, it will not be popular, as has been the case so far,” an official said, requesting anonymity.

Unlike in India, where a drought nearly always stokes a crisis, in countries such as the US, farmers make the biggest profits because of insurance when crops fail. In 2012, for example, when US corn farms wilted under the fifth-most severe drought, aggregate farm profits went up 3.7% due to insurance payouts, according to the US department of agriculture.

An inter-ministerial panel – which includes the home, finance and farm ministries – is steering the proposal. It recently reviewed the draft scheme and will meet again shortly, the official said.

The NDA government aims to make agricultural insurance in India universal and popular, which will automatically take care of losses in farm income without the need for laborious, clumsy state interventions that often don't work.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Pulses flare up every third year, says Crisil study



There is a clear pattern of a spike in pulses inflation every third year, though this year the peak is higher than the last two peaks, with wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation already crossing 34 per cent average so far, says a report by CRISIL Research.

Deficient monsoon

It said this year's spike can be explained by supply side shocks, mainly from deficient monsoon and higher global prices, while various other factors – such as drought and delayed rains, high growth, shift toward protein consumption and demand pushed up by higher rural wages due to NREGA – can explain the previous spikes.

Overall, what has impacted pulses production most are three consecutive monsoon shocks – deficient South-West monsoon in 2014 and 2015

affecting the kharif season output and weather disturbances in March 2015 affecting Rabi output.

Four States – Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh – produce about 70 per cent of the country's pulses output. Except in Rajasthan, the other States have seen acute rainfall deficiency in four out of the last eight years, hitting production.

Food inflation

The report noted that while food prices were the biggest contributor to the decline in the consumer price inflation (CPI), pulses inflation had seen the sharpest spike in a decade. The CPI and WPI inflation for pulses was 42.2 per cent and 53 per cent, respectively, in October.

Historically (1983-84 to 2014-15), WPI pulse-inflation rate in India has averaged 8.9 per cent, which is higher than the overall WPI inflation of 6.7 per cent average. But in the last decade (2004-05 to 2014-15) while overall WPI inflation rate fell to 6.3 per cent, pulses inflation has been much higher at 9.4 per cent average.

“Such high inflation rate in pulses is undesirable for a country where pulses are second most important part of diet after cereals and an average Indian spends nearly 5 per cent of his food expenditure on pulses,” says the report.

Concerned at low acreage of pulses amid rising demand, the report said at a time when global pulse prices are elevated and the rupee is weak, resorting to imports could provide limited comfort to domestic prices.

Noting that uncertainty about getting stable returns could have led to large-scale substitution of area under pulses cultivation to other high-value crops, the report noted that since pulses was a significant component of the consumption basket, any rise in its prices can have a huge impact on inflation expectations and can influence wage-price negotiations.

This is especially critical given that the Reserve Bank of India's inflation target is set at around 4 per cent in the medium-term.

India Intl Coffee Fest at Mumbai from Jan 19-23

About 60 companies and 500 delegates are expected to participate in the India International Coffee Festival 2016 that will be held in Mumbai from January 19 to 23. The five day event is aimed at creating a gateway to the country's unsaturated market for the domestic and international stakeholders. The per capita consumption of coffee in India is pegged at around 90 grams.

"Celebrating with Coffee" is the central theme of IICF 2016 that will provide a glimpse into the current coffee development and emerging opportunities. Several eminent speakers, industry specialists and globally renowned experts will deliberate on how the coffee technology has evolved over the last two years.

Coffee Board chairperson, Leena Nair said the domestic consumption has been growing by 5-6 per cent annually over the past few years and stands at over one lakh tonnes. The Board has initiated a fresh round of survey to assess the consumption trends and the report is expected to be out by the end of the year.

Nair also said that the crop prospects for the current season looks good on account of timely rains this year and that the exports were looking up in volume terms despite a fall in prices. The Board has issued export permits for 1.84 lakh tonnes till end October, a growth of 12 per cent over the previous year, she said.

Anil Kumar Bhandari, President, India Coffee Trust said growth in coffee consumption was higher in non-traditional areas such as the northern states at around 43 per cent, driven by the growing cafe culture, rising disposable incomes and lifestyle changes. In the traditional coffee consuming states, the growth in offtake was at around 2.5 per cent. The overall growth in domestic coffee consumption was at 5-6 per cent annually, whereas globally it is between 2-2.5 per cent.

The biannual flagship coffee sector event being organised by the India Coffee Trust, a not-for-profit organisation formed by various stakeholders, and supported by the Coffee Board of India.

Palm oil industry welcomes 100% FDI but wants land ceiling norms relaxed

The Oil Palm Developers and Processors' Association (OPDPA) has welcomed the Centre's move to allow 100 per cent Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in oil palm plantations. The association feels that the move would help fill the gaps in supply of the edible oil.

It, however, wants relaxation of land ceiling norms to facilitate the growth of oil palm acreage and to allow large-scale plantation.

India, which grows oil palm in 2 lakh hectares, has a potential to expand the acreage to 20 lakh hectares, keeping in view the demand. The industry, which provides employment to 20,000, can create two lakh jobs more if growth projections are to be met.

“With this positive step from the Government of India, this massive potential can be cashed into and India's palm oil import burden of \$10 billion can be reduced,” said Sanjay Goenka, President of OPDPA, has said.

While calling for an exclusive palm oil import policy, the association feels that the current import duty levels are not supportive to oil palm farmers and the industry.

He called for formation of a separate oil palm development board to aid the promotion of the industry as planned by the Government. “This will also help address issues facing the farmers and industry on a regular basis. These issues are largely going unattended and is one of the reasons for poor palm oil development in the country,” he felt.

The association also wanted the Government to draft a long-term subsidy policy to support the farmers.

“The palm oil industry deserves highest priority and encouragement to meet the internal demand of edible oil, resulting in strong imprint on savings of foreign exchange,” he said.

For agri business page



TEA PRICES DIP AT KOCHI SALE

A good demand and better arrivals have not helped revive prices at Kochi tea auctions, with rates of several varieties remained lower. The market for CTC grades was lower by Rs. 3-7 a kg. However, the drop in prices was less for a few select good liquoring teas. In sale no 46, the quantity on offer in dust grades was 10,22,500 kg. Plainer teas also sold around at last levels. Blenders continued to be active on good liquoring varieties, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said. In orthodox varieties, the market for primaries remained steady to firm, while secondaries were easier. In Cochin CTC dust quotation, good varieties fetched Rs. 105-143, mediums quoted Rs. 71-104 and plain grades stood at Rs. 55-67. The leaf sales also witnessed a good demand with well made good liquoring Nilgiri all varieties remained dearer. CIS and traditional exporters were active. V Sajeev Kumar

Cardamom up on buying interest

Cardamom gained marginally on supply squeeze last week at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Some of the auctions were suspended because of the Diwali festival and, as a result, the arrivals dipped last week.

Against 796 tonnes arrived the week before, 361 tonnes of the material came last week. Of this, 347 tonnes were traded.

PC Punoose, General Manager, CPMC, said for the growers anything below Rs. 700/kg is not a remunerative price. Exporters were seen active last and they are estimated to have bought somewhere between 70 and 100

tonnes. The individual auction average last week moved up and vacillated between Rs.608 and Rs. 650 a kg.

Total arrivals during the season up to November 14 were at around 10,782 tonnes against 6,607 tonnes as on November 15, 2014. Sales were at 10,484 tonnes and 6,495 tonnes respectively.

The individual auction average as on November 14 was at Rs. 635.30/kg (Rs. 782.76).

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): 8mm bold good green colour 930-950; 7-8 mm 720-730; 6-7 mm 600-620; below 6 mm: 570.

Mumbai to host coffee fest in January

About 60 companies and 500 delegates are expected to participate in the India International Coffee Festival 2016 that will be held in Mumbai from January 19 to 23. The event is aimed at creating a gateway to the country's unsaturated market for the domestic and international stakeholders.

The per capita consumption of coffee in India is pegged at around 90 grams, thereby leaving huge room to boost the offtake.

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In the traditional coffee consuming States, the growth in offtake was at around 2.5 per cent. The overall growth in domestic coffee consumption was at 5-6 per cent annually, whereas globally it is between 2 and 2.5 per cent.

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Business Standard

[Spike in pulses prices every third year between 2004-05 and 2014-15:](#)

The recent spike in pulses prices, primarily that of tur (arhar) - when rates touched Rs 200 a kg - was not a one-off, says a recent analysis by CRISIL.

According to the rating agency, there was [inflation](#) in pulses every third year between 2004-05 and 2014-15, owing to a variety of reasons, especially supply disruption.

However, the peak seen in pulses inflation in 2015 was higher than the previous two peaks. [CRISIL](#) says both supply and demand factors are responsible for keeping the price level high. Supply constraints arise from lower product supplies, while demand factors arise from higher incomes (especially in rural areas) which have caused a shift in food consumption from cereals to more protein-based items.

On average, an Indian spends five per cent of his food expenditure on pulses.

The 2015 spike has been mainly due to three consecutive droughts in main growing areas, hurting overall production, and elevated global prices making imports costly.

Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh account for around 70 per cent of India's total pulses production.

Of these states, all except Rajasthan have seen acute monsoon deficiency in four out of the past eight years, badly impacting pulses production.

Irrigation is of little help as only 16 per cent of total area under pulses in India is under irrigation.

The analysis shows that pulses supply in the country is inadequate as production has remained constant since 2004, while demand has accelerated, leading to a decline in the per-capita availability of pulses and a spiral in prices.

Pulses accounts for around 20 per cent of area under foodgrains production, but less than 10 per cent foodgrain output.

Over the past 20 years, output has grown by an average of two per cent, while acreage has grown even lesser at 0.8 per cent, which is why yield rose by only 0.9 per cent during the period.

[Pulses check WPI's negative spiral](#)

But, slack demand keeps core readings morose

The fall in Wholesale Price Index (WPI) based [inflation](#) was less steep in October, at -3.8 per cent compared with 4.5 per cent in September, as a sharp rise in [pulses inflation](#) pushed [food inflation](#) (primary + manufactured) up. But, weakness in global crude oil and commodity prices kept overall

headline inflation in negative territory. Domestic demand, too, continued to remain slack, keeping manufactured products' inflation as well as core inflation in negative territory. Core inflation, as measured by the [CRISIL Core Inflation Indicator](#) (CCII), stood at -0.4 per cent, better than the -0.7 per cent recorded last month.



Food inflation (primary food articles + manufactured food products) rose to 1.7 per cent in October, compared with 0.2 per cent last month. The increase was mainly due to pulses (weight of 0.7 per cent in WPI), which saw inflation spike 53 per cent in October, the highest in a decade, up from 38.6 per cent in September.

The highest inflation rate among pulses articles was recorded in tur (arhar) at 73.1 per cent, followed by gram (56.9 per cent) and urad (66 per cent). Across pulses categories, inflation has spiralled, but the sharpest rise is in tur - 46.2 per cent - where sowing this year has lagged trend. CRISIL's Deficient Rainfall Impact Parameter, which measures crop-wise impact of weak rains, highlights tur as the most affected crop this year.



Adverse supply shocks at frequent intervals have exacerbated the upward pressure on pulses prices - a commodity where supply has lagged demand in recent years. Supply shortfall has had a larger

role to play than demand in the current spike. The demand-side influence is weak as rural wage growth has been declining dramatically and also GDP growth is much weaker.

Successive monsoon shocks to production have led to an increase in prices. In 2014-15, pulses production fell 4.3 per cent, and this year estimates suggest kharif pulses production growth at 1.1 per cent is much below the trend growth rate of 4.3 per cent. Two successive years of deficient south-west monsoons hurt the kharif pulses production, while weather related disturbances in March destroyed the rabi pulses crop (which is about 68 per cent of the total production).

Manufactured products inflation remained in the negative zone and was unchanged from the last month, at -1.7 per cent. Here, while inflation in manufactured food rose to 0.2 per cent from -0.7 per cent in September, almost all other major categories recorded a lower inflation rate relative to September.

Two factors are at play behind the low manufactured products inflation - sluggish domestic demand conditions and continued softening in global commodity prices. The former has disallowed an increase in market prices whereas the latter has brought down input costs for Indian manufacturers.

So far this financial year, global metals and minerals prices have fallen an average 21.3 per cent on-year and global fuel prices have slipped 45 per cent, while the rupee has weakened by only 6.9 per cent, bringing down cost of production.

And, given slack domestic demand conditions (with the added impact of a second consecutive deficient monsoon which has dented rural incomes), core inflation measures have remained negative. The CRISIL Core Inflation Indicator (CCII) stood at -0.4 per cent in October compared with -0.7 per cent in September. CCII inflation rate has been declining for 15 months now and has been negative since July this year.

Another measure of core inflation, non-food manufacturing inflation (which includes the volatile base metals category), was at -2.1 per cent in October compared with -1.9 per cent last month.

CCII offers a better perspective on core inflation because it negates the effect of volatile categories. It excludes base metals as their prices are mostly determined by changing global demand-supply dynamics and volatility in exchange rate rather than just domestic conditions.

This exclusion causes a variance in CCII and non-food manufacturing inflation. Global metal prices dropped 23.3 per cent on-year in October, pushing wholesale price inflation in the basic metals category down to -7.5 per cent in October, compared with -6.7 per cent last month.

Tomato prices start falling as supply improves



After running high for about a week, [tomato](#) prices in the wholesale [markets](#) have started dropping, on the back of increased supplies. Compared with about Rs 40 a kg in the past week, prices have come down to Rs 20 a kg in the Delhi wholesale market.

Supply was low in the past week owing to long Diwali holidays, as well as heavy rains in southern India, pushing up prices in most retail markets.

During the Diwali holidays, transporting of goods slows down and labourers stay away from farms, leading to drop in supplies.

According to data from the department of consumer affairs, prices had risen Rs 20-30 a kg in the retail markets between October 1 and November 14.

In Delhi, the retail price had moved up from Rs 39 a kg in end-October to Rs 60 a kg on November 14. In Chennai, prices soared by as much as Rs 40 a kg.

"Supplies dwindled as most of the tomatoes produced in Bengaluru were diverted to meet the demand coming from Chennai, where the crop was damaged due to widespread rains. This led to a drop in supplies to northern India, including Delhi. However, the situation has now improved," said a trader from Delhi's Azadpur wholesale market.

Rajendra Sharma, former chairman of the Azadpur agricultural produce market committee in New Delhi, said increased imports to Pakistan had also pushed up tomato prices, which will now come down. "The retail price of almost all vegetables will now fall as supplies will be good till February."

India's tomato production in 2014-15 crop year was 0.43 million tonnes (mt) less than the production in 2013-14 at 18.3 mt, data from the agricultural department showed.

Black pepper prices to soften soon on Sri Lankan import

This not because of rise in local production, but due to import of other origins especially from Sri Lanka

The sharp rise in black [pepper](#) prices is likely to moderate soon, in light of the increase in supply. This is not because of a rise in local production, but thanks to import, especially from Sri Lanka. Dealers from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai and Kochi are importing around 750 tonnes from Sri Lanka at eight per cent duty. This is over and above the duty-free quota of

import. The shipment is likely to reach various ports soon, said market sources.

The importing price is \$9,500-9,750 a tonne against the Indian offer of \$11,400.



According to the trade pact with Sri Lanka, 2,500 tonnes can be imported duty-free and 22 suppliers had got the licences for duty-free import. Roughly 350 tonnes of these had already reached the Indian market, especially in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Bengaluru. Apart from this, more parcels of pepper, which was seized earlier on alleged mineral oil content, will be released in the next few weeks. Six-hundred tonnes were already released. This is for the first time that a major chunk of the 6,400 tonnes of stock, sealed in December 2012, is being released.

This was made possible after a Kolkata-based food testing laboratory okayed 1,500 tonnes.

The commodity's local supply will be ensured through import and this is likely to moderate the prices, said Kishore Shyamji, a leading trader. He said the market would not collapse, but the incessant increase for the past month might be arrested. It is the local festival demand in north India that helped the market rise. Stock-holding for the winter season is active now. There is also robust demand is from the grinding industry.

The pepper market will be on a tight mode mainly because of local demand. Local growers are not immediately selling the produce as they expect further increase in prices.

Since a sharp fall in production is expected in the next season, buying interests were active during past couple of months, said Shyamji.

The Indian stuff has lost its sheen in global [markets](#) as India offers the highest price across all origins.

Vietnam now offers \$9,800 a tonne, Indonesia \$9,700-9,800 and Brazil offers \$9,500. Overseas buyers were not considering India, except the ones who have special preference for Malabar grade pepper. Currently, the Indian market is driven by local demand only.

Meanwhile, the latest projections indicate a total output in the range of 50,000 tonnes this season.

Veg oil imports up 24% on low domestic supply

Decline in availability from domestic sources on lower seed availability and negative crushing parity trigger the rise

India's [vegetable oil](#) imports jumped 24 per cent in oil year 2014-15 (October to November), following a sharp decline in availability from domestic sources on lower seed availability and negative crushing parity.

Data compiled by the apex industry body, Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA) showed India's import at 14.61 million tonnes in the year ended October compared to 11.82 million tonnes in the past year.

Oil year 2014-15, has set a new record for highest import of palm products and soft oils like soyabean, sunflower and rapeseed (canola) oils. In fact, import of vegetable oils during October 2015 is reported at 16.71 million

tonnes compared to 12.46 million tonnes for October 2014, up by 34 per cent. Import of [edible oil](#) in October, 2015, is the highest import in any single month since allowed in open general licence (OGL) in 1994.



Similarly import of palm products during October 2015 is the highest in any single month.

Import of edible oil has sharply increased in last few years due to stagnant oilseed production and rising oil demand in the country. India's dependence on imported oil has increased to 70 per cent of its requirements.