

Date: 07.07.2015

THE HINDU

Mobile-based services to help farmers



THE HINDU

VIJAYAWADA (AP) FRIDAY, 30/07/2010: _ A farmer tilling the land for kharif sowings takes a break to strike a conversation on his mobile phone, at Kundavari kandrika near Vijayawada. _ PHOTO: RAJU_V. (DIGITAL MAGE)

Mobile based services for farmers and other stakeholders being delivered through organisations, departments and offices of Central and State Governments down to the block level (including State Agriculture Universities, Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Agro-Meteorological Field Units) have been brought together under a single umbrella, namely, mKisan portal of the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India. The URL is www.mkisan.gov.in.

mKisan portal subsumes all mobile-based initiatives in the field of agriculture and allied sectors, according to Department of Agriculture Co-operation. It brings together SMS (both push and pull), interactive voice response system, unstructured supplementary services of data or USSD (which is essentially an interactive SMS and can facilitate data entry and query on web portals without Internet), mobile apps and services.

‘Allow Kani students to study agriculture’

Students belonging to 48 Kani tribal habitations in Kalkulam taluk should not be prevented from choosing Agriculture as one of the optional subjects in Plus Two, said S. John Victor Doss, State convenor of Adi Dravidar Munnetra Kazhagam.

In a petition submitted to the Collector, he alleged that the Headmaster of Government Higher Secondary School in Pechiparai prevented the tribal students from choosing Agriculture as an optional subject during the current academic year. Mr. John said that a girl from the community who studied Agriculture as one of the subjects had scored 1,008 marks in the last academic year.

There were two Agriculture teachers in the school. One retired from service last year.

Consensus eludes meet on urea subsidy



The Hindu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 30, 2015 presided over a meeting of senior Ministers and officials, which discussed if the subsidy could be provided directly to farmers instead of the current policy of giving it to the producers. File photo
At present, the subsidy is paid to urea producers and importers, not farmers.

Consensus continues to elude the Centre on the politically sensitive reform of the urea sector, where it has accumulated an unpaid subsidy bill of Rs. 40,000 crore.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over a meeting of senior Ministers and officials last Tuesday, which discussed if the subsidy could be provided directly to

farmers through the direct benefit transfer scheme instead of the current policy of giving it to the producers.

The de-canalisation or freeing up of imports and other ways in which urea prices could be de-controlled were also discussed at the meeting. However, the meeting ended without a decision on the way forward on urea reforms. Urea is the only fertilizer yet to be de-controlled.

STILL ON THE TABLE

Urea is the only fertilizer yet to be de-controlled

➔ Centre has an accumulated unpaid bill for subsidies worth **Rs. 40,000 crore**

➔ Providing subsidy **through the direct benefit transfer scheme to farmers** is under consideration

“As far as subsidies go, not much can be expected from this government, which the Opposition has already labelled anti-farmer,” a source, who attended the meeting, told *The Hindu*.

A decision on the option of direct benefit transfer could not be taken at the meeting as there was no agreement on what criteria ought to be used for identifying the eligible farmers

Eligibility issue stalls DBT route to urea reform

“The criteria of landownership would exclude majority of farmers and it could also result in the emergence of a black market for urea as not all farms...orchards for instance...require the fertiliser,” a source at the meeting said.

At present, the subsidy is paid to urea producers and importers, not farmers. The Fertiliser Ministry determines separately, for every single manufacturing plant, the difference between the market price and cost of production for urea for the purpose of calculating the subsidy. “There is an urgency to clean up the high amount of discretion in the Fertiliser Ministry in determining the urea subsidy and also address the worsening problem of overuse of urea by Indian farmers,” said another source who attended the meeting.

Fertiliser Minister Ananth Kumar, Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh, Niti Aayog Vice- Chairman Arvind Panagariya, Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian and Finance Secretary Rajiv Mehrishi were among those at the meeting.

Futile attempts

The UPA Cabinet headed by former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had on several occasions unsuccessfully taken up the proposal of shifting urea to the Nutrient Based Subsidy regime in use at present for other fertilisers.

130 calls in 5 days

Calls are pouring into the farmers' helpline set up at the office of the Joint Director of Agriculture.

Over 130 farmers have called the helpline in the last five days and sought remedies for their problems.

The Agriculture Department at the behest of Deputy Commissioner C. Shikha had setup the helpline on July 1 to enable farmers to get technical guidance on scientific cultivation and to register complaints. The helpline aims to inform farmers that the administration is there to help them and to prevent them from taking any extreme step.

M. Mahanteshappa, Joint Director of Agriculture, told *The Hindu* on Monday that many complaints were against banks that were issuing notices. A farmer said his neighbours had received the bank notice that was sent to him and that he felt humiliated as the whole village had come to know about his arrears.

Many farmers complain that banks refuse to give sanction loans unless they clear earlier arrears.

The helpline also got calls from farmers who complain against erratic power supply. The complaints were sent to senior officials of CESK, Mr. Mahanteshappa said.

The Agriculture Department

had launched a farmers' helpline on July 1

Farmers demand water for irrigating first crop

Double-crop area farmers say delayed action will hit farming operation

Farmers of the double-crop area between Peranai in Dindigul district and Kallandiri in Madurai district demanded the Public Works Department officials to immediately release water for irrigating the first crop.

Led by Periyar Vaigai Project Committee president M. Murugan, they met Executive Engineer M. Muthupandi and renewed their demand. “We had met the engineer on June 24 and petitioned him for earlier release for water.

Though he promised to fulfil our demand, there was no official word to date,” Mr. Murugan said. Water for the first crop on the 45,000 acres of ayacut of double-crop area is usually released on or after June 1 as and when the combined Periyar credit – storage of Periyar water in both Periyar and Vaigai dams – touches 4,000 mcft. The storage touched the 4,000-mcft mark on June 28, but the officials had not made any announcement with regard to water release, M. Tirupathi, a farmer, said.

Stating that the farmers were invariably raising paddy crop with a lifespan 120 days, he said further delay in water release would have a cascading effect on starting the farming operation. “Eventually, the standing crop will get ready for harvest when the monsoon is at its peak,” said Mr. Tirupathi.

The PWD officials, he said, did not take into account the huge storage available in various tanks in the area in the Periyar credit for early release of water. “Besides, the wet condition could have helped the farmers in starting the farming operation,” he added. However, the Executive Engineer said the proposal for release of water had been sent to the government.

He said that the officials wanted to have a comfortable storage in the reservoirs before the water release, as in the last one week the inflow to Periyar dam had been minimal.

The storage touched the

4,000-mcft mark on June 28, but the officials made no announcement

with regard to water release

Rural realities

New data for rural households revealed by the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) represent a grim reminder of the state of rural India. In over 90 per cent of households, the main earning member makes less than Rs. 10,000 a month. Over half the households are landless and a similar share of them rely on casual manual labour for the larger part of their income. Just 20 per cent of households own any kind of a motor vehicle. These numbers should come as a reality check for those who talk of India's unbridled growth, and arrival on the global stage as a superpower. The countryside remains unable to find jobs that can pull families out of poverty. Agriculture remains at subsistence levels, with low mechanisation, limited irrigation facilities and little access to credit. Just over 3 per cent of rural households have a family member who is a graduate, so skilled jobs are going to be hard to get.

Female-headed households, and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe households are the worst off. The eastern and central States of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have the poorest indicators. Even in the developed southern States of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, family incomes are low and dependence on casual manual labour is high. Meanwhile, early results from the urban SECC suggest that levels of deprivation, while lower in cities, are still shockingly high.

What the government chooses to do with the data is as yet unclear. While commissioning the SECC, the UPA government had spoken of creating flexibility to enable States to draw up their own combinations of indicators to create tailor-made definitions of poverty. The Narendra Modi government is yet to make its intentions clear on the SECC, especially with regard to the thorny issue of where to draw the line. Instead of a fresh round of unseemly wrangling over precisely where to set India's poverty line, the government would be well-advised to expand and universalise its social protection schemes, and leave some space for States to innovate.

It would also be wise for the government to release caste-wise information on socio-economic indicators collected by the SECC but not yet put in the public domain. Those numbers would allow, for the first time since 1931, for the relative socio-economic status of various caste groups to be compared while framing policies of affirmative action. This government stands accused of suppressing vital new information on the status of malnutrition among children, contained in a survey commissioned by the previous government through UNICEF. It should not make a habit of suppressing inconvenient data. The Indian public might hotly contest some of these numbers, particularly those relating to caste, but even angry debates represent a democratic right that must not be curtailed.

KVK all out against snail menace

To organise demonstrations on how to destroy the pests



A threat: African snail menace has made life miserable for people in 16 grama panchayats of Kollam district.

African snails are making life miserable for people living in 16 grama panchayats of Kollam district. The menace is posing a threat to crops and water resources. The snails are also crawling into houses.

At a press conference here on Monday officials of the Kottarakara-based Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) under the Kerala Agricultural University said that the panchayats of Kottarakara, Pooyapally, Vettikavala, Melila, Veliyam, Velinellur, Chithara, Kummil, Kundara, Perinad, Pattazhi Vadakekkara, Yeroor, Edamulakkal, Karavaloor, and Kadakkal had been badly hit.

KVK head Nobel Abraham said that African snails were first reported in the State in 1970 in Palakkad. The menace began in Kollam five years ago. The snails fed on more than 500 varieties of plants in the State and hence posed a threat to both environment and man.

These pests multiplied fast. The KVK had charted out effective plans to destroy the snails. He said that a mixture of tobacco, tea and copper sulphate was effective in destroying these pests.

Baits could be set to attract them and then the mixture could be sprayed on them. The KVK would be giving demonstrations of these methods in the affected areas.

On July 9, district panchayat president S. Jayamohan would inaugurate the programme at the KVK complex.

Rs. 2.52-crore kuruvai package for farmers in Thanjavur dt.



Housing and Urban Development Minister R. Vaithilingam inspecting kuruvai plantingsystem at Arasapattu near Orathanad.

: A sum of Rs. 2.52 crore has been allocated to farmers for applying bio-fertilizer and micro nutrients under the 'kuruvai' package scheme in the district, said R. Vaithilingam, Minister for Agriculture.

Speaking after inaugurating the mechanical transplanting of 'kuruvai' saplings at Arasapattu near Orathanadu on Sunday, he said a target of 80,000 acres had been fixed for the programme.

He said the Agriculture Department had identified 12,000 acres as sodic-affected soil in the district for which arrangements had been made for distributing gypsum at an expenditure of Rs. 72 lakh. On free use of mechanised transplanters, he said Rs. 10 crore had been allotted for using the technique on 40,000 acres. Bed nurseries had been raised on 103 acres and transplantation had been completed on 6,558 acres so far.

N. Subbaiyan, Collector, K. Parasuraman, MP, Amudharani Ravichandran, District Panchayat president spoke.

Workshop

: The District Panchayat will organise a day-long workshop for Thanalkoottu unit animators in toxin-free vegetable cultivation here on Tuesday.

Thanalkoottu chairman Umer Arakkal said that the workshop was part of the V-CAP scheme implemented by the District Panchayat. P.K. Abdul Jabbar, agriculture scientist from Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Ambalavayal, Wayanad will lead the workshop.

Swaminathan to head vision group on agriculture

In the wake of the agrarian crisis in Karnataka, the government has decided to constitute a 'vision group', headed by eminent scientist M.S. Swaminathan.

In reply to demands by the agriculture and horticulture departments, Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda informed the Assembly on Monday that Prof. Swaminathan has accepted the State government's invitation to head the vision group, which will study the agricultural sector in the State. Farmers' representatives will also be included in the group, he said.

Mr. Byre Gowda said the farm sector has been facing several challenges owing to erratic monsoons and drought.

The vision group would recommend ways to boost growth in the sector and make the farmer's profession economically viable.

It will also study the functioning of agricultural universities in the State.

A new Karnataka Agri-Business Policy would be announced this year to address challenges in the agro-processing sector. A new drip irrigation policy would be announced this year, and the insurance cell would be revamped to popularise crop insurance schemes, Mr. Byre Gowda said.

Aadhaar seeding of voter ID cards to be completed soon

After ensuring Aadhaar data integration with voter ID cards, officials are now planning to put in place a mechanism to validate voters based on their Aadhaar biometric data.

Incidentally, in Nellore district, Aadhaar details of 98 per cent of voters have been integrated with the electoral data as part of the digital drive aimed at using the unique identification data for error-free results.

“Under the digital India initiatives, the unique ID data has become very useful in ensuring transparency. It has proved effective even in the identification of school dropouts for their re-enrollment,” Joint Collector Md. Imtiyaz said.

Meanwhile, District Information Officer S.S. Sai, who also heads the National Informatics Centre (NIC) here, said 100 per cent Aadhaar seeding of voter ID cards would be achieved soon. “The process is expected to facilitate the usage of biometrics at polling booths to prevent impersonation and electoral irregularities,” he added. Officials are at work to extend the benefits of e-governance initiatives to various departments. As part of the initiative, beneficiaries are encouraged to make maximum use of the e-POS system at fair price shops, so that there will be no scope for diversion of commodities meant for the Public Distribution System.

“The digital initiatives are yielding good results when it comes to removing disparities between the rich and the poor, but they are also proving a little ineffective, with some employees not actively taking part in the process,” Mr. Imtiyaz said.

Meanwhile, soil testing reports and weather updates from a particular region will be available real time at kisan centres and websites dedicated to farmers.

The process [Aadhaar seeding of voter ID cards] is expected to facilitate the usage of biometrics at polling booths to prevent impersonation and electoral irregularities.

S.S. Sai,

District Information Officer

KAU launches admission portal

Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) has launched an admission portal as part of the Digital India programme.

Vice Chancellor P. Rajendran officially launched the programme at a function at the university headquarters..

Addressing the function, the Vice Chancellor said the possibilities of extending digitization to all walks of life were being successfully explored.

“Paperless office and cashless transactions, which were once considered unimaginable, have become realities. Since sharing knowledge and access to services is the primary objective of Digital India programme, an institution like the KAU has a key role to play,” he said.

The KAU admissions portal (www.admissions.kau.in) has already catered to nearly 10,000 students, of which 6,500 students completed the full service delivery process. The portal was designed and developed by the KAU’s Centre for e-Governance in coordination with National Informatics.

P.V. Balachandran, Registrar, in his introductory remarks highlighted the role of educationists in enhancing digital literacy among citizens.

He said the KAU would organise a special camp to enable its staff to open folders in digilocker, a feature launched as part of the Digital India programme.

District Informatics Officer Suresh Menon explained the salient features of the Digital India programme. “The programme is aimed at preventing digital division of society and caters to the increasing demand for faster services.

Safe cyberspace

“The programme will provide safe and secure cyberspace to each citizen and digilocker is a great boon to society,” he said.

Rallying to infuse confidence in farmers

The two-day rally, launched on Monday, will cover nearly 60 villages



Farmers will march from Mysuru to Ganadahosuru in Pandavapura taluk of Mandya district.— PHOTO: M.A. SRIRAM

Members of the Karnataka State Sugarcane Cultivators’ Association launched a rally on Monday to reach out to fellow farmers in a bid to curb the rising suicides in recent times.

The two-day rally aims to infuse confidence among farmers who are in distress owing to crop failure and pressure to repay their loans.

The rally titled ‘Atmahatye Tadege Raitara Nadige Halliya Kadege’ was launched from the park opposite the court complex after garlanding the bust of Mahatma Gandhi.

It was inaugurated by Nanjundaiah, a farmer. Association president Kurubur Shanthakumar held the policies of the State and Centre responsible for the present agricultural crisis. He flayed the State government and the Centre for not doing enough for the farmers though more than 25 had committed suicide in the last couple of weeks.

Mr. Shanthakumar said many farmers were practising sustainable agriculture and this should be emulated by others.

“Mr. Nanjundaiah of Shinappanahalli village, who launched the rally, is a shining example. He is practising sustainable agriculture on his five acres of land without falling into the debt trap,” Mr. Shanthakumar said. “Farmers should not contemplate suicide under any circumstance fearing loan repayment,” he added.

The M.S. Swaminathan Committee report on agriculture should be implemented to help farmers tide over financial crisis, according to the farmers’ association. .

The crux of the problem lies in the existing system where farmers do not get farm loans on time nor is there a scientific price-fixing mechanism which forces them to borrow from moneylenders and financial institutions at exorbitant interest rates, they said.

Farmers will march from Mysuru to Ganadahosuru in Pandavapura taluk of Mandya district, where a sugarcane farmer set himself ablaze recently. Enroute, the rally will cover nearly 60 villages and hold small meetings.

Sugarcane growers may switch over to commercial crops

Non-payment of dues by sugar factories, lack of support from government cited as main reasons

Many growers are having second thoughts about continuing with sugarcane cultivation after harvesting for the crushing season 2015-16.

What prompted them to switch to commercial crops or horticultural crops is the fact that many sugar mills are not paying them the price of their produce judiciously, let alone scientifically. The other reason is the alleged lack of support from the government.

Incentives announced

The government announced a State Advisory Price of Rs. 2,500 along with an incentive of Rs. 150 and an additional incentive of Rs. 100 per tonne linked to the payment of the fair remunerative price of Rs. 2,200 and above per tonne for the crushing season 2013-14, only after a grower committed suicide during the Winter Session of the legislature here in November, 2013.

The government, which failed to ensure the promised price to growers due to the reported reluctance of sugar mills since then, made another promise, again under pressure from growers on the second day of the ongoing legislature session here that the dues would be cleared by July 31.

The government is yet to announce the price for 2014-15 even as the crushing ended a few months ago.

The growers' faith in the government is fast eroding, as they realise that Ministers and legislators belonging to the Congress and the Opposition parties have stakes in sugar mills and they will not take or allow any decision against the interests of these companies.

'Incurring losses'

However, sugar mill owners claim that they have been incurring losses.

They are attributing it to the increasing cost of production and the volatile price of sugar in the market in the last few years.

The price of sugar was Rs. 2,000 per quintal this season. But, the growers say the mill managements do not speak of the alleged theft of sugarcane through faulty weighing, showing lower recovery percent and less than actual sugar production, the profits earned out of by-products such as ethanol, brews from the distilleries and the savings due to co-generation and inefficient management of available resources.

They ask if these mills are incurring losses, why politicians want to control sugar mills and spend money to get elected to the board of directors of cooperative mills.

‘Marketing godowns will be built with Rs.138 crore’



Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao taking part in Haritha Haram programme at Siddipet in Medak district on Monday. --PHOTO: Mohd. Arif

Irrigation Minister T. Harish Rao said that marketing godowns with a total capacity of 2.3 lakh metric tonnes would be constructed in all the mandals across the district.

Participating in Haritha Haram programme held at Mirdoddi and others areas and later speaking to reporters, Mr. Harish Rao said that each godown would be constructed with a capacity of 5,000 metric tonnes and a total of Rs. 138 crore would be spent for this purpose. He said that construction of godowns in the State would cost the exchequer about Rs.1,000 crore.

“All these godowns will be constructed in scientific manner and farmers can stock their produce here till a good price is being offered by the buyers. Farmer can also get 75 per cent of produce price as interest free loan under ‘Rythu Bandhu’ scheme,” said Mr. Harish Rao adding that the Marketing Department would own responsibility for the paddy parked in the godowns.

Informing that another 32 market yards would be established in the State in addition to existing 150 market yards, Mr. Harish Rao said that reservation for market chairman posts would be implemented shortly for the first time in the country.

Earlier in the day, the Minister planted saplings at several places.

Come profit or loss, a stickler for pokkali

A seasoned farmer turns 90, and intends to continue with the 'culture' she inherited

Champion pokkali rice farmer Baby Joseph Kalathungal turned 90 on Sunday. The celebrations were confined to her Chellanam home, where six of her eleven children gathered for a lunch. The wishes were genially accepted, a birthday cake was cut, and pokkali rice farming's heyday was reminisced about. But times have changed, profits have dipped, but the seasoned farmer says she will not be dissuaded by the rigours of pokkali cultivation. She has sunk a substantial amount of money this season to bring five acres of paddy holdings at under sowing.

However, motor pumps were deployed too late and "the fields got flooded and the seeds were lost," she says.

How to be more involved in healthcare?

While it is important to try and live a healthy life, eat the right kind of foods, exercise regularly and lead a stress free life, it is equally important for one to be informed as much as possible about ones health and participate actively in the decision making process along with health care team like doctors, nurses, dietitians etc. This is especially true if one is on treatment for any medical condition. People who talk with their doctors and nurses about their conditions in detail tend to be happier with their care and have better medical outcomes. Here are a few tips on how to get the information one need, and participate actively in own healthcare:

When visiting the doctor:

Take a copy of all previous health records, including previous consultation notes and the results of any tests undergone. Carry along details of all the medicines one takes, including prescription medicines, non-prescription medicines, or herbal supplements. Explain symptoms, whether they are improving or worsening and any previous health problems one has had in the past. Ask questions to make sure and understand what the doctor is saying and discuss.

Find out what to do next. If available, ask for: written instructions, any brochures about condition, any video or website or any other resources where one can read more about the condition one has been diagnosed with and the treatment options.

When taking medicines:

It's important to know as much as possible about the medicines one is taking. Here are some examples of questions one could ask the doctor or find out more information on through other resources available:

How will this medicine or medicines work for my condition?

Are there any other non medical interventions one can try before starting this medicine?

How will one know if this medicine is working? What are the symptoms or signs one need to look out for?

Will need any tests while on this medicine?

How long will I have to take it? What should I do if I feel better and have no symptoms anymore?

What if I miss a dose? Do I take two doses the next time?

What side effects can occur and how will I know what to do?

Can I take this medicine at the same time as other medicines?

How do I store this medicine? Do I need to put it in the refrigerator?

Visit

www.medplussmart.com for important facts about medicines, uses, side effects, precautions, alternatives etc.

Brisk sale of fresh water fish

Villagers show the way for entrepreneurship

A trader marketing fresh water farm fish at Mannargudi.— Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

A group of fish traders show the way for successful entrepreneurship by catering to the needs of residents of a cluster of villages near Vaduvur.

Neivasal on the Mannargudi – Tiruthuraiipoondi segment has been witnessing a brisk sale of fishes in the morning round the year. What makes them special is that

they market live fishes and, obviously, the business lasts for a just couple of hours in the morning.

A number of men and women vie with one another in marketing two types of quality fishes – ‘jilebi’ and ‘kendai’. While the ‘jilebi’ fish weighs anywhere between 300 to 500 grams, the larger ‘kendai’ weighs about one kg. Their sale price per kg is Rs.140 and Rs. 170 respectively.

The taste and demand of the villagers in the periphery is such that they would purchase only live fishes. Catering to their demand, traders sell the fishes keeping them in a sheet of water in tin plates.

Neivasal, by virtue of its strategic location, has been just a marketing place while it is a cluster of villages where the fishes are grown in farm ponds. “We grow fishes in our ponds and bring them in the early morning,” says M. Chinraj, one of the traders. He purchases fisher lings from a trader at Vaduvur, a nearby village.

The villages where the ponds are located include Kulamangalam, Meytirumeni, Arasapattu, Thenpathi, Mandarayankudikadu, Akkarai and Thaanthoni. “The pond is just one km from the Neivasal. We start catching live fish around 3-00 a.m. every day and reach the shop at about 6-00 a.m. to sell the fishes within three to four hours,” say S. Mariappan and M. Prabakar, other traders.

They have learnt the work from their forefathers though they do not belong to fishermen community.

Traders say that they were quite happy with the entrepreneurship as they were realising an assured returns. In fact, they used to get orders for bulk supply of live fishes. They said protection technique was more important in the trade. “During abundant rainfall, the fishes develop some disease called ‘unni’ with spots all around the body which affects the growth and size of the fishes. They apply some chemicals to cure the disease.

On the other side of the highway, there are a chain of fast food restaurants, indicating an assured market for the produce.

Land bill: House panel to discuss it clause-by-clause, report next month

Between July 16 and 18, members of the panel would also get notices to move their amendments to the bill.



several RSS affiliates and NDA allies are opposing some provisions of the government's Land Acquisition bill.

The Joint Committee of Parliament looking into the contentious Land Acquisition (Amendment) Bill will take up clause-by-clause consideration of the bill later this month, ahead of submitting its report on the first day of the second week of monsoon session of Parliament beginning July 21.

During its meeting Monday, the committee decided that if the government is able to reply to its queries on July 16, it could take up clause-by-clause consideration of the bill from July 22, sources said.

The committee decided to summon secretaries of concerned ministries on July 16 to hear their views on amendments to the 2013 Act. Secretaries from ministries like Legal Affairs, Legislative Department, Rural Development and Commerce Ministries, and top Railway officials are likely to appear before the committee.

Between July 16 and 18, members of the panel would also get notices to move their amendments to the bill.

The panel, which had sought an extension of one week, has now been given time till July 28 to fulfil its mandate.

It has so far received representations from various organisations and individuals on the amendments to the 2013 law.

Depression may shrink your brain: study

Chronic depression may shrink the hippocampus, a brain area responsible for forming new memories, a new global study of nearly 9,000 people has warned.



Chronic depression may shrink the hippocampus, a brain area responsible for forming new memories, a new global study of nearly 9,000 people has warned.

The brains of people with recurrent depression have a significantly smaller hippocampus than healthy individuals, researchers said.

The study is the largest international research to compare brain volumes in people with and without major depression, they said.

It highlights the need to identify and treat depression effectively when it first occurs, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

Using magnetic resonance imaged (MRI) brain scans, and clinical data from 1,728 people with major depression and 7,199 healthy individuals, the study combined 15 datasets from Europe, the US and Australia.

Major depression is a common condition affecting at least one in six people during their lifetime, researchers said.

It is a serious clinical mood disorder in which feelings of sadness, frustration, loss, or anger interfere with a person's everyday life for weeks, months or years at a time.

The key finding was largely explained by subjects with recurrent depression. People with recurrent depression represented 65 per cent of study subjects with major depression, researchers said.

People with an early age of onset of major depression (before the age of 21 years) also had a smaller hippocampus than healthy individuals, consistent with the notion that many of these young people go on to have recurrent disorders.

However, people who had a first episode of major depression (34 per cent of study subjects with major depression) did not have a small hippocampus than healthy individuals, indicating that the changes are due to the adverse effects of depressive illness on the brain.

"These findings shed new light on brain structures and possible mechanisms responsible for depression," said Associate Professor Jim Lagopoulos of the University of Sydney's Brain and Mind Research Institute.

"This large study confirms the need to treat first episodes of depression effectively, particularly in teenagers and young adults, to prevent the brain changes that accompany recurrent depression," said Co-Director of the Brain and Mind Research Institute, Professor Ian Hickie.

"This new finding of smaller hippocampal volume in people with major depression may offer some support to the neurotrophic hypothesis of depression," Lagopoulos added.

The study was published in the journal *Molecular Psychiatry*.



[Gujarat to adopt Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra models to improve HDI](#)

To improve Gujarat's performance on the Human Development Index (HDI) count, the state government has decided to adopt the successful public health model of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and some best practices from Karnataka.

At the recent three-day Chintan Shibir, a detailed presentation was made on the Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra public health models. The state government

decided to adopt best practices in these states to improve HDI of state which has remained poor due to poor health services to the people.

J P Gupta, principal secretary , health & family welfare department (public health) & commissioner health said, “At the Chintan Shibir, one of the key focus areas was challenges in improving the public health services. Our main area of concern is lack of manpower. Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and at a some extent Karnataka have better public health models, so we have decided to replicated these models in Gujarat too.”

“Tamil Nadu has Medical Recruitment Board which recruits doctors. We may adopt the pattern to suit our needs. Our biggest problem is non-availability of doctors. We have been able to improve public health infrastructure and now our focus is recruiting staff to provide good public health services,” added Gupta.

Waterborne diseases on rise in city

This July , the city registered 171 vomiting and diarrhoea cases in just three days, while there were 28 cases of typhoid and 49 cases of jaundice, clearly indicating that waterborne diseases were on rise. Since January , the city has recorded 3,884 vomiting cases followed by 1,536 cases of jaundice and 1,084 cases of typhoid and 34 cases of cholera. In case of vector or mosquito borne diseases, the AMC's health department has registered 49 cases of malaria and two cases of falciparum. “Most of the areas which had high incidents of water borne diseases, especially the south zone have shown rapid decrease in number of cases,” says a senior AMC official.

Eat, Pray You Don't Fall Sick

Science-driven standards and making industry accountable will tone up our food safety regime

The Food Safety and Standards Act was enacted by Parliament in 2006 after nearly 10 years of deliberations with great hopes of building a modern, technologically vibrant food sector. But stakeholders are now asking whether this

much awaited law is in danger of being whittled down and its original intentions defeated.

For the last six months there has been no full time chairperson at FSSAI. Staff strength is getting depleted and there is a chronic shortage of people with risk assessment skills

The intent of this law was to bring all food related statutes together, introduce scientific risk assessment methodologies and transparency in the determination of food standards, and tackle the problem of food contamination before the contamination actually took place.

But for the last six months there has been no full time chairperson at Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI). Staff strength in FSSAI is getting depleted and there is a chronic shortage of people with risk assessment skills who can understand and deal with the complex issues involved in food safety.

The food safety regulator is in danger of drifting back to the obsolete and unscientific procedures which governed food safety regulation in the country under the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act, which has since been repealed. India's food industry also seems to be blissfully unaware of the impending crisis which can upset all their investment plans and product innovations.

The new Act recognises that food safety is not merely a matter of punishing acts of food contamination but involves scientific determination of standards, holding industry accountable for safe manufacture of food and risk-based regulation in line with the resources and skills available.

Making the law more stringent is no guarantee for effective implementation as is clear from the more than one lakh food safety related cases pending in courts. Most developed countries have moved on to risk-based and science-driven food safety standards and industry is being held squarely accountable for safe food through verifiable standards monitored by the regulator.

By taking on the vast and unnecessary responsibility of approving the safety of each individual food product, the food safety regulator is constantly under pressure to clear thousands of products, many of which may have ingredients which have safe limits laid down either within the country or internationally.

However, since no risk assessment is carried out, there is no documentary basis for regulatory decisions. Besides, no reasons are given for approvals, approvals are often contradictory , and there is no procedure for appeals or time limits for clearance. This seems to have seriously hampered the process of innovation and introduction of new and often healthier products in the market.

It should be noted that product approval by a team of officers is no guarantee of food safety. The food item has to be manufactured safely in line with the standards and this can only be ensured by insisting that industry follow verifiable process standards on a day to day basis, get certified by accredited agencies and be subject to risk-based inspections.

Even an advanced country like the US is able to inspect only 1% of the total food produced in the country . What other countries have done is to lay down easily understood safety standards and guidance documents for ensuring compliance. They intervene only when malfeasance is detected. India really needs a paradigm shift in its food safety regulation system from relying solely on supply-side food safety, it should develop demand-pull systems for it. Demand-pull systems work with consumers demanding quality and safety attributes in food and forcing the supply side to fall in line. Failing which, they would be made to face punitive market response and regulatory action.

Keeping in view the large unorganised sector India's food safety law requires the regulator to lay down simple standards, undertake extensive food safety education, and enable industry to achieve and demonstrate safety . Drafts of critical regulations such as food labelling, functional foods, standards for school meals, water quality and so on are awaiting the regulator's attention.

That's not all. Public food testing laboratories need to be upgraded urgently. Thousands of food safety professionals need to be trained to man vacant posts in the states. The regulator also needs to work with state governments to bring the use of chemicals in agriculture to safe limits.

In US, the government recently undertook a review of implementation of its food law and brought in significant changes in its implementation. In UK, the food regulator has made industry primarily responsible for food safety and has laid down methods of certification and accreditation to verify that it does so.

The wonderful opportunity that was provided by the Food Safety and Standards Act to modernise the food sector with safety, transparency and inclusiveness as its prime objectives, seems to be on the verge of collapse. Reversion to the command and control approach of the old food laws is not an option either because it has been found severely wanting.

The march of technology and new products requires a responsive mindset towards regulation and a willingness to learn. When decisions are not backed by science and due diligence, the regulator runs the risk of being rendered irrelevant to the needs of a fast changing economy and society .

The writer was the first Chairperson of Food Safety and Standards Authority of India

Healthy munch: Broccoli Tikki recipe



A crispy and delicious teatime/evening snack or can also be served as a starter/appetizer to any meal. Best served warm with chutney or sauce of choice.

Ingredients:

Broccoli - 200 gms, finely chopped
Potatoes - 125 gms
Plain Flour (Maida) - 100 gms
Corn Flour - 1/4 cup
Butter - 2 to 3 tblsp
Ginger Garlic Paste - 2 tsp
Oil for frying
Red Chilli Flakes - 2 tsp (adjust as required)
Salt as per taste
Black Pepper Powder as per taste

Optional:

Onion - 1/2 cup, finely chopped

Method:

1. Boil, peel and mash the potatoes well.
2. Heat butter in a pan over medium flame.
3. Saute the broccolis for a minute or two.
4. Combine the mashed potatoes, corn flour, maida, broccolis, ginger garlic paste, red chilli flakes, salt and black pepper powder.
5. Mix well and shape the mixture into small/medium tikkis.
6. Heat oil in a deep frying pan.
7. Fry the prepared tikkis until golden brown.
8. Remove and drain excess oil.
9. Serve hot with chutney or sauce of choice.

Note: If using onions, then saute with broccolis at step #3.

Recipe Courtesy: awesomecuisine.com

Stay healthy with these drinks

The thought of taking time for a healthy breakfast rarely breaks the stride of the jet-setting business traveler. Why not opt for a few healthy drinks that are loaded with nutritiotional benefits instead.

Balance Smoothie

Ingredients

70 g Banana, 250 ml Orange juice, 5 ea Baby spinach leaves, 1 tsp Cocoa powder, 125 ml Soya Milk, 2 tbs (20 g) Ground Almonds

Method

Blend the banana, baby spinach, almond and cocoa powder with the Soya milk. Then add the orange juice and blend until completely smooth. Serve chilled.

The nutritionist's comments

Banana is rich in the important electrolyte potassium. A diet rich in potassium seems to have a blood pressure lowering effect. Banana is also rich in the water soluble fiber pectin's and acts soothing on the gastro intestinal tract. Pectin's have a cholesterol lowering effect too.

Nutritional information

Energy 1520 kJ, Protein 12 g, Fat 11 g, Carbohydrates 53 g, Fibers 4 g

Health Smoothie

Ingredients

60 g Banana, 100 ml Fresh squeezed orange juice, 120 g Strawberries, 6 Mint leaves, 125 ml Soya milk, 2 tbs (20 g) Ground Almonds

Method

Blend the banana, strawberries and mint leaves with the soya milk. Add the orange juice and almond and blend until completely smooth. Serve chilled.

The nutritionist's comments

Apart from the great sweet taste of summer, strawberries offer support for optimal health due to the phytonutrient that gives the vibrant red color in the skin of the berry. Strawberries tend to give us protection against inflammation and heart disease.

Nutritional information

Energy 1290 kJ, Protein 11 g, Fat 12g, Carbohydrates 39 g, Fibers 5 g

Good energy juice

Ingredients

400 g Beetroot, 40 g Baby Spinach, 500 g Carrots, 100 g Apple red, 1 Tsp Chopped dill

Method

Cut the beetroot, baby spinach, apple and carrots and extract juice with a extractor. Add the chopped dill. Mix until juice is smooth. Add a table spoon of crushed ice and stir before serving.

The nutritionist's comments

This juice is rich in healthy vegetables and helps you balance the blood sugar and gives you great energy and helps enhance your mood. Spinach helps detoxify hormones and beetroot supports digestion, which is important for absorbing nutrients.

Nutritional information

Energy 2141 kJ, Protein 8,5, Fat 4, Carbohydrates 115, Fibers 23

Essential dietary guidelines for good health



Good health depends a lot on what you put on your plate.

And it is essential that to maintain good health, you include nutrients like carbohydrates, protein and good fat in your daily diet.

Carbs are the most important thing to have — they provide you with the much needed energy that your body requires to function and perform its day-to-day tasks. They also keep your brain sharp. make sure to include vegetables, whole grains, beans, fruits, dairy and legumes in your diet and be generous with your helpings (but not too much!).

Also high on your list should be fiber — which comes in two types — insoluble and soluble. The first keeps your digestive tract on track and prevents constipation while the latter keeps your blood sugar and cholesterol levels on track. Foods that contain fiber include oats, apples, oranges, certain vegetables like peas, wheat bran and whole grains.

Limit your sugar consumption — eating food items that contain sugar will only result in weight gain thanks to the calories they contain. Processed foods have added sugar and food items like pizzas, sweet beverages, butter, candies, etc contain sugar, which can prove to be detrimental for your health in the long run.

Another important aspect of your diet should be protein, this nutrient is essential for the growth of cells in your body apart from the fact that it provides your body with energy.

If you're a vegetarian, protein can be found in beans, lentils and soy products.

If you're a non-vegetarian, fish, lean meat, dairy products and poultry are all packed with protein.

For more stories, follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

[Eating citrus fruits may increase melanoma risk](#)



Frequent consumption of citrus fruits -- whole grapefruit and orange juice -- may be associated with an increased risk of melanoma, a type of skin cancer, says a large study.

Analysing dietary patterns among more than 100,000 people in the US, the researchers found that melanoma risk was 36 percent higher in people who consumed citrus fruit or juice at least 1.6 times daily compared to those who consumed them less than twice per week.

Consumption of grapefruit and oranges was not associated with an increased risk for any other non-skin cancers.

"While our findings suggest that people who consume large amounts of whole grapefruit or orange juice may be at increased risk for melanoma, we need much more research before any concrete recommendations can be made," said lead study author Shaowei Wu, postdoctoral research fellow at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island.

"At this time, we do not advise that people cut back on citrus -- but those who consume a lot of grapefruit and/or orange juice should be particularly careful to avoid prolonged sun exposure," Wu noted.

The apparent link between melanoma and citrus fruit consumption may be due to high levels of substances called furocoumarins found in citrus fruits, the researchers pointed out.

Prior research showed that furocoumarins make the skin more sensitive to sunlight, including to melanoma-causing ultraviolet (UV) rays.

The new study involved over 100,000 men and women in the US. Over a follow-up period of up to 26 years, 1,840 study participants were diagnosed with melanoma.

Higher overall citrus fruit consumption (the total number of servings of whole grapefruit, whole oranges, and juices from those fruits) was associated with increased risk of malignant melanoma in both men and women.

The association was strongest for grapefruit, followed by orange juice.

The study was published online in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

Combat stress with the right nutrition



Often a nagging headache, insomnia or decreased productivity at work is misinterpreted as an illness, when the actually culprit might be STRESS.

The human body is designed to experience stress and react to it. Stress can be both positive and negative. It can also contribute to health problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and PCOD. Stress releases the hormones cortisol and adrenaline in the body. These hormones can speed up the metabolism of the body to quickly produce energy, which at times is a positive change, but an excess release of these hormones pushes the body to secrete amino acids, potassium, phosphorous and magnesium. This leads to muscle breakdown, which affects the immune, digestive and reproductive systems.

Tips to reduce stress:

Eight hours of undisturbed sleep is an important factor, which will help combat stress. Serotonin, a hormone present in the GI (gastrointestinal) tract and the nervous system, helps you sleep better.

Here are some guidelines to enhance the production levels of serotonin in your body, increase productivity at work and create a balanced life:

Exercise releases endorphins, the feel good chemicals in the body and plays an important role in releasing serotonin. Pre-workout and post-workout meals are also important as they can affect our bodies.

Take some time out to listen to your favourite music or meditate or indulge in your favourite sporting activity.

Stay away from junk, refined and processed foods and instead include whole grains and cereals like ragi, oatmeal, whole wheat and quinoa in your daily diet. Apart from them giving you a steady supply of energy, these cereals are rich in B vitamins which enhance the production of energy from carbohydrates, proteins and fats. Junk foods with simple carbohydrates and sugars cause your blood sugar to spike and then fall quickly which can cause your energy levels to dip.

Asparagus is very high in folic acid and vitamin B and can help maintain your mood as it helps in making serotonin.

Cottage cheese is a protein from an animal source and helps in releasing serotonin. Proteins contain a large amino acid called tryptophan that converts to serotonin. Tryptophan, the amino acid works best when consumed with carbohydrates.

Almonds, high in monounsaturated fats and stable fats are also rich sources of vitamin B2, vitamin E, zinc and magnesium. Have a handful of almonds early morning, mid-day or mid evening.

Vitamin C: Citrus fruits reduce the production of stress hormones and strengthen the immune system. They are also high in fibre and are generally low calorie fruits.

Omega 3 fats: These fats break down into a hormone like substance called prostaglandins, which help against inflammation and pain. So, it helps fight headaches. Include fish like tuna and salmon in your diet or flaxseeds for vegetarians.

Avocados: A rich source of potassium and monounsaturated fats helps in releasing serotonin. Though one must be aware of portion size as it is high in calories.

Milk, a good source of slow release sugars, lactose and calcium along with a high content of protein and vitamin B2 and B12, helps in preserving the tryptophan and releases serotonin.

Read more Personal Health, Diet & Fitness stories on www.healthmeup.com

Health boosting benefits of cinnamon



While cinnamon is a popular spice in Indian cooking, did you know that it has a host of health benefits as well?

Made from the inner bark of trees called cinnamomum, here's why you should include it in your daily routine... Packed with antioxidants, cinnamon is said to make sure your body can withstand oxidative damage, which happens when free radicals enter the body.

- Also called a superfood, cinnamon contains antioxidants called polyphenols, which helps keep illnesses at bay.
- The spice contains anti-inflammatory properties, which help keep inflammation at bay, repair tissue damage and even battle infection
- Keep your heart strong by regularly adding cinnamon in your diet — it has antioxidants that keeps heart disease away.
- The spice is also helpful in keeping blood sugar levels regulated — grind some cinnamon sticks into powder and have a teaspoonful every other day.
- Those suffering from high cholesterol should also include cinnamon in their diet to keep their cholesterol levels in check.
- Suffering from a bacterial infection? Try chewing on some cinnamon sticks. The spice contains cinnamaldehyde, which helps the body fight infections.
- The spice in a paste form can also be used to apply on the gums when you suffer from gum bleeding. It also helps prevent tooth decay.

For more stories, follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

Exercises for blood pressure patients



Exercises can improve your blood pressure problems. Yes, it's true. Blood pressure is a growing health ailment in several young adults, hence it is important to curb this problem.

And that's why Jivesh Shetty with BCUBE (Advanced sports nutrition) explains the importance of exercise to improve health for people with blood pressure issues. He shares some easy fitness tips you can practice everyday to control your blood pressure. Ready?

Jivesh explains how you can control blood pressure with exercise, "People with blood pressure (low/high) issues can benefit from both types of training - cardio and strength training, just like any trainee without BP issues. A combination of strength training and cardiovascular/aerobic training is ideal."

He makes a crucial point, "Important thing to note here is that there must be a steady build up to higher intensity levels. Do not hold your breath while performing the exercises. Pre training warm up; intermediate and post training stretching is also very important here."

For your overall wellbeing he says, "Always listen to your body, stop your activity right away if you get severely out of breath or dizzy or if you experience chest pain or pressure."

Besides hard core fitness training, Jivesh gives you other options you can try to control blood pressure. He suggests, "Yoga and Meditation can also prove very useful. A regular yoga routine helps control the mind and body to reduce stress and control hypertension. A simpler meditation practiced for ten minutes every day can also lower blood pressure."

Take life with a pinch of salt and take out the pressure out of blood pressure.

THE HINDU BusinessLine

Below-normal rainfall in July raises questions over kharif sowing; only north-west in surplus

First week crucial for sowing of pulses, oilseeds & cotton; June surplus wiped out



New Delhi, July 6:

The surplus rain of June appears to have been wiped out with the latest data released by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Monday showing rain between July 1 and July 6 at 214.4 millimetres (mm) below the normal of 215.3 mm.

This week is seen as crucial for Kharif crops, especially pulses, oilseeds and cotton, as much of the sowing is yet to happen.

The IMD estimated steady rains across north-west India, which received 12 per cent above normal rainfall over the period. The dry spell is likely to be covered up by end-July, said private agency Skymet. “The monsoon was in a weak phase through the last week, but overall rain this month should be around the normal (+- 4 per cent). I believe the worst for the month is over. It depends on the second half of the month to make up for the shortfall and there are positive systems developing,” said GP Sharma, Vice-President, Meteorology, Skymet.

The rain in the Capital through Monday and across Western and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Bihar, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and sub-Himalayan West Bengal, is due to a Western disturbance pulling the monsoon trough northward. These conditions are likely to last another three days to a week, said Sharma, who expected only parts of peninsular India and certain pockets of Gujarat and Maharashtra to receive subdued rain over the month.

“We are seeing two good systems forming, one of these around July 10, which should move inland over Gujarat and the central parts of the country. This region will, however, not receive much rain over the next three or four days,” he added. The IMD, which has forecast rainfall to be 92 per cent of the normal in July, also expects steady showers across the Gangetic plains, with parts of Southern and Western India likely to receive less rainfall.

As per the data published, rainfall in East and Northeast India was 4 per cent lower than normal between July 1 and July 6, while Central India and the South peninsula had shortfalls of 2 and 1 per cent, respectively.

“The Northwest is getting good rain, which will continue over the next few days. Parts of peninsular India, such as North interior Karnataka and certain regions in Gujarat will likely get less precipitation,” said BP Yadav, Director, IMD.

Crucial week

While Kharif sowing is up nearly 58 per cent over the corresponding period last year, as per Agriculture Ministry data, rain this week is crucial for pulses, oilseeds and cotton growing regions that are rain-fed, considering the bulk of sowing is yet to be carried out.

“Rain during this week is very important, since there has not been much of it over the last two weeks. It is crucial not only for the crops sown but also for the rest of the area left to be sown at this point,” JS Sandhu, Agriculture Commissioner, told *BusinessLine* .

“We have asked farmers to be judicious with water that’s been retained in ponds and other bodies.

“It’s not a scary situation with reports saying that rain is likely through the week, but yes, the sown crop definitely needs water now,” added Sandhu.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 7, 2015)

Arecanut export push pays off; Chinese team visits Karnataka



Mangaluru, July 6:

The efforts of the Central Arecanut and Cocoa Marketing and Processing Cooperative (Campco) Ltd to export arecanut to China are making headway with representatives from a Chinese company visiting arecanut-growing regions in Karnataka.

Addressing presspersons in Mangaluru on Monday, K Padmanabha, Campco President, said that the cooperative has held a second round of discussion with the China-based company Kou Wei Wang.

Following this, a team of experts from the company is touring arecanut-growing regions in Shivamogga and Tumakuru districts of Karnataka during week. Apart from selecting tender arecanuts, the team will also train the people in the region to process the tender arecanut to meet their requirements.

Quoting his dialogue with company representatives, he said the company uses tender arecanut for preparing mouth-fresheners.

Padmanabha said that mouth-fresheners prepared out of the peel of tender arecanut are in huge demand in China. Though China produces around 1.2 lakh tonnes of arecanut, it still requires more to meet its demand in the market.

Initially, the Chinese company wants to procure around 3200 tonnes of tender arecanut from Campco.

He said the tender arecanut from the red arecanut-producing regions in the state will be used for exports. (In the case of red arecanut, growers harvest the tender arecanut, remove the peel, and boil the nut to prepare red arecanut.)

Suresh Bhandary, Managing Director of Campco, said that the Chinese company wants the growers to harvest tender arecanut and boil it along with the peel. Only the peel will be used for preparing mouth-fresheners, he said.

He said that the cooperative is planning to export around 10 tonnes of processed tender arecanut to China on a trial basis by the end of December. If this export is successful, then the cooperative can think of large-scale export of tender arecanut to China, he said.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 7, 2015)

Cardamom loses flavour as arrivals surge

Kochi, July 6:

Cardamom prices declined at last week's auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu on a continued upsurge in arrivals.

Total arrivals last week were at 406 tonnes against 348 tonnes the previous week.

Total supply during April-June was at 5,190 tonnes whereas it was at 3,351 tonnes in the same period in 2014 recording a 55 per cent increase, PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

Exports of small cardamom have shown an increase last fiscal despite rise in unit value. The country has shipped out 3,795 tonnes of cardamom valued at Rs. 323.47 crore at a unit value of Rs. 852.35 a kg against the set target of 3,000 tonnes valued at Rs. 225 crore.

Whereas, last year, the exports stood at 3,600 tonnes valued at Rs. 283.81 crore at the unit value of Rs.788.36 a kg.

A continued upsurge in arrivals this season seems to have created a bearish sentiment in the market.

The buyers have slowed down hoping the prices would decline further as the harvesting progressed, trade sources in Bodinayakannur claimed.

Export buying showed a marginal uptrend last week. Exporters have bought an estimated 40-45 tonnes of cardamom.

Arrival of exportable variety capsules continued to remain thin, they said.

The trade attributed the slowdown in upcountry buying to unfavourable season in the north Indian States.

The downward trend continued at today's auction conducted by the Cardamom Planters' Association auction in Bodinayakannur.

A total of 18.1 tonnes cardamom arrived and of this 16.5 tonnes were traded.

The maximum price was at Rs. 803 a kg and the auction average fell to Rs. 631.30 from Rs. 684.46 last Monday. The individual auction average has decreased and was vacillating between Rs. 630 and Rs. 670 a kg.

Total arrivals during the season up to July 4 stood at 21,482 tonnes (21,330 tonnes).

The sales were at 20,895 tonnes and 20,606 tonnes respectively.

The auction average as on July 4 was at around Rs. 670 a kg (Rs. 795).

Prices of graded varieties (Rs. /kg): 8 mm bold good colour 950-990; 7-8 mm 770-800; 6-7 mm 640-675; below 6 mm: 580-610.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 7, 2015)

No major revival of monsoon seen until month-end

Thiruvananthapuram, July 6:

Model predictions suggest that there will likely be no major revival of monsoon for the next 20 days, leading to below-normal rains for July.

The monsoon will be confined to the foothills of the Himalayas until last week of July, says an extended forecast from the Pune-based Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology.

Largely dry

Excess rain in the region is expected to fill up the rivers of north India while central and peninsular India may stay largely dry. The US Climate Prediction Centre concurs with this outlook for the next fortnight, though it does not rule out a round of showers for east and central India from enhanced activity in the Bay of Bengal.

Unlike earlier projections, models do not see an organised weather system (low-pressure area) from the Bay piloting the showers over the landmass during this period. A best-case scenario is that conducive conditions for a monsoon revival may evolve by around July 25 after the busy typhoon season ends in the west Pacific.

Below normal

The India Met Department has already said that July is likely to see below normal rains (92 per cent of the long-period average). Observed conditions and short-term model forecasts tend to support this outlook.

The weekly rain surplus that came in at 44 per cent until June 24 plummeted to a deficit of 14 per cent by the following week ending July 1, marking a tapering of the monsoon activity.

As on Monday, the overall rain surplus has been reduced to zero after the monsoon forfeited the huge gains made earlier in June.

Of the four agro-climatic regions, only north-west India retains the surplus.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated July 7, 2015)