

THE HINDU

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Punjab to promote fish farming

Chandigarh: The Punjab Government on Monday said it has earmarked funds to the tune of Rs.11.16 crore for 2013-14 to promote fish farming in the State.

Disclosing this here on Monday, Punjab Fisheries Minister Gulzar Singh Ranike said an outlay of Rs.11.16 crore has been earmarked in the annual plan 2013-14 against Rs.10.55 crore during 2012-13.

He said that farmers were adopting intensive fish culture in ponds and tanks on modern scientific lines through composite fish culture of fast growing species. – PTI

Tobacco farming a rage in Ongole

Farmers see a bright market for tobacco, dump Bengal gram cultivation



Special flavour:Tobacco, the principal commercial crop in Prakasam district has caught the farmers' fancy.-Photo: Kommuri Srinivas

Dampened by the depressing market for Bengal gram, farmers in drought-prone Prakasam district are gearing up to grow tobacco in a big way during this year, putting to nought the government's efforts to restrict its cultivation in view of the health hazards.

Thanks to weakening rupee and fall in productivity in tobacco-growing countries like Tanzania, Brazil and Zimbabwe, tobacco got the highest bid of Rs.160.20 per kg in Ongole. The growers were able to get an average price of Rs.108.77 per kg in the region marketing 62.50 million kg, Tobacco Board Regional Manager G. Bhaskar Reddy said, while talking to *The Hindu* on Monday.

On the other hand, growers of the exportable varieties of Bengal gram were saddled with 24 lakh tonnes as there were no takers for KAK-2 and Mexican bold variety even at half the sale price of Rs.7,500 per quintal prevailing last year. The principal pulse crop attracted buyers at Rs.3,009 per quintal in the NCDEX on Monday.

“The tenant farmers are busy entering into lease agreement paying Rs.12,000 per acre as rent as against Rs.8,000 last year in Kandukur, Nagulapupadu, Tangutur and Ongole rural mandals expecting attractive returns this year,” revealed Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam State vice-President N. Ranga Rao.

Going by the present trend, the extent of tobacco cultivation could go up by 30,000 to 40,000 acres. Production may go up by forty per cent to cross the 100 million kg mark in the Ongole region alone in the next season, he added.

Rent for tobacco barns has doubled from Rs.50,000 to Rs.1 lakh, said former Tobacco Board member Marella Subba Rao.

Reminding the farmers about the glut in the market leading to crop holiday in 2001, Tobacco Board member P. Bhadri Reddy urged the farmers to stick to the crop size, lest they fail to get even the cost of production.

Concurring with the view, VTGWA honorary president Ch.Ranga Rao said, thanks to sustained efforts of Tobacco Board chairman K. Gopal in curbing tobacco sale outside the auction platforms, farmers were able to get a better price this year.

“India is seen by global players only as an opportunity market and not a definite market.

Any violation of the crop size will go against the farmers' interest," VTGWA president Ch. Seshaiyah said.

He urged the Central Tobacco Research Institute to release new hybrid varieties to enable farmers improve productivity and reduce the cost of cultivation at a time when all farm inputs were going up.

Meanwhile, the Indian Tobacco Association has projected the crop requirement at 175 million kg in the coming year.

Tobacco growers in the State have realised an average price of Rs.134.36 per kg marketing so far 129.14 million kg of tobacco as against authorised crop size of 169.78 million kg. Bright grade tobacco accounted for about 50 per cent of the produce this year.

Ryots abandoning agriculture in Congress regime: KEK

The TDP politburo member and MLA K.E. Krishna Murthy has said over 13 lakh farmers abandoned agriculture in the State in the last few years due to adverse conditions.

Talking to reporters here on Monday, he said crop holiday had never happened in the State.

The farmers' resolve to keep their lands fallow, demonstrated the crisis in the State.

About 60 per cent of farmers are caught in a debt trap and about 23,000 farmers committed suicide.

Scoffing at the Congress claims regarding improvement in farming, the TDP leader said that there was no improvement whatsoever during the Congress regime. In fact, it deteriorated due to the anti-farmer policies being pursued by ruling party. He said the economy of the State and Central government was in doldrums.

The government hiked the prices of petrol 32 times and diesel 24 times. Law and order situation had deteriorated with land and sand mafia ruling the State.

He said the industrialists were shying away from the State due to rampant corruption and litigation.

He said 35 lakh acre cultivable land was converted to commercial purpose but no industries had come up. He said only Mr. Chandrababu Naidu could clear the mess with his administrative capabilities and statesmanship.

He said Mr. Naidu demonstrated his concern for the flood victims in Kurnool in 2009, Cyclone victims in 1996 at Rajahmundry and Chardham victims recently.

About 60 per cent of farmers are caught in a debt trap and 23,000 farmers committed suicide

Farmers from tail-end region stage protest

A large number of farmers from the Bhadra tail-end region staged a demonstration in front of the Irrigation Department office here on Monday in protest against the reported plan to release excess water to a tank in Hadadi by laying another pipeline from the Bhadra canal. They urged the executive engineer of the Irrigation Department Motilal Naik not to send the proposal for laying pipeline from the canal to the tank and not to release more water to the tank.

They later submitted a memorandum to the executive engineer.

B.M. Sathish, farmers' leader, said that he had reports from reliable sources about the proposal to lay a new pipeline from the canal to the tank to fill it with Bhadra water and help a sugar factory situated in Kukkuwada, which belonged to the family of an influential political leader. Farmers of Bhadra tail-end region, including Shiramagondanahalli, Naganur, Bisleri, Shamanur, Jarikatte, Mitlakatte, Hale Kunduwada, Hosa Kunduwada, Kodihalli and other villages would have no

water if excess quantity was supplied to Hadadi tank. It was only the farmers of tail-end region who were paying the water tariff and it was their legitimate right to get their share of Bhadra water for every season.

He warned that if the officials connived with political leaders to provide water to the sugar factory, farmers of the tail-end region would resort to agitation. Mr. Motilal Naik, who agreed that there was a proposal to lay a new pipeline, told Mr. Sathish that he would request his superior officials to keep the proposal in abeyance, in view of the opposition from farmers.

Elephants destroy sugarcane crop

A herd of six elephants that were camping in the foothills of Yercaud hills for the past two days, destroyed sugarcane crop here on Monday morning.

Forest officials said the herd was in Senkaradu, about 3km from Kurumbapatti Zoological Park and asked people not to enter the forest area.

Officials said the herd entered the sugarcane field only during night hours and left early in the morning.

“We are closely monitoring the animals’ movements so that they do not enter human habitations,” said the forest officials.

The panic-stricken people in the villages had a sleepless night as they feared that the herd would enter the village and damage their houses.

“We fear for our lives,” said villagers in Kurumbapatti.

They said though it was not an elephant corridor, encroachments in the forest land and efforts by farmers to drive the herd have resulted in the animals entering villages.

Officials said the elephants may move around the hill to another location after they consume the sugarcane field and look for fodder elsewhere.

Farmers in Yadgir district celebrate Mannettina Amavasya

Farmers across the district celebrated Mannettina Amavasya on Monday.

The day was marked by farmers performing special pujas to clay and mud idols of bullocks.

The idols are taken in a procession to the village border and are brought back after performing another puja. They are then left on the roof where the rain will gradually wash them away.

“Placing the idols on the roof is an age-old practice. We believe that this will bring rain for our crops,” said Mallikarjun Gulagi, a farmer.

He added, “We love our bullocks as much as we love our children. They are a part of our life till the end.”

Caged aquaculture project proves a success

Project launched by CIFRI, Bangalore, and State Fisheries Department



Vythiri grama panchayat president K. Gagarin inaugurating the caged aquaculture harvest from a demonstration battery set up on Pookode Lake in Wayanad district.

A caged aquaculture demonstration project in inland water, a first in the State in the Pookode Lake in Wayanad district, has proved to be a great success.

It was launched by the Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI), Bangalore, in association with the State Fisheries Department.

As much as 80 kg fish was caught in the first harvest from a demonstration battery, consisting of two cages measuring nine sq m a cage. It recorded a good growth of the fish. As many as 200 fingerlings of the Indian major carp species had been deposited in a cage nearly seven months ago and 160 of them had an average size of 500 g now, B.K. Sudheer Kishan, assistant director-in-charge, Fisheries Department, said.

The project was launched to sensitise farmers to the scope of caged fish farming. Caged aquaculture has a vast potential in the district as the innumerable water bodies, including the reservoirs of the Karapuzha and Banasura Sagar projects, were yet to be tapped properly, M. Feroz Khan, scientist-in-charge, CIFRI, told *The Hindu*. Mr. Khan is supervising the project.

Moreover, it was a cost-effective method of fish farming as the farmers could feed, evaluate the growth of the fish, and harvest without any difficulty. Total harvesting and swift return of investment; less mortality rate; less requirement of manpower; better control of fish population; efficient control of fish competitors and predators; and minimum supervision were the added advantages, he added. Mr. Khan said the CIRFI was planning to launch caged aquaculture in the Karapuzha reservoir soon. P. Gagarin, president, Vythiri grama panchayat, inaugurated the harvest.

Poultry farmers chicken out, ban import

Not being able to stand competition, the All Manipur Poultry Farmers & Traders Association has decided to strictly prevent import of chicken from other States.

While traders could sell imported chicken at about Rs. 90 a kg, local farmers have to mark up the price at Rs. 200, taking into account the payments made to insurgents who are extorting taxes on all items brought through National

Highways 39 and 53, which are the lifelines of the State, association representatives told journalists here on Monday.

“It is a question of survival of local poultry farmers,” they said.

Rain: houses, crops destroyed

District Collector C.A. Latha has said that loss owing to the heavy rain on Sunday has been estimated at Rs.14 lakh. Ten houses were destroyed in various parts of the district. At Chorod and Chengorath, crops belonging to 112 farmers in 25.92 hectares have been destroyed, a release said. — Staff Reporter

Farmers hit by policy changes: Sainath

The Centre’s policy changes have affected the farmers since cultivation cost has mounted, according to P.Sainath, Rural Affairs Editor, *The Hindu* .

He was addressing a meet organised by the All India Kisan Sabha at Kovilpatti on Sunday evening to motivate farmers in Tuticorin district to participate in the 33rd national-level Farmers’ Conference to be held in Cuddalore between July 24 and 27.

While neglecting farmers who were in dire need of agriculture loans, bankers were more interested in serving the corporate sector, he said. The rate of interest for loans for farm implements was higher than that of a vehicle loan.

“Agriculture is not only about output but about culture, occupation, civilisation and livelihood of farmers,” he said.

Eighty per cent of the 2,84,600 farmers who committed suicide in the country had raised cash crops, mainly cotton. Had all the suicides been reported, the accurate figure could be much higher, Mr.Sainath said.

‘Study soil thoroughly’

He appealed to the farmers to study the soil thoroughly and sow seeds that best suited specific conditions. All India Kisan Sabha should have a research cell in every district, he said.

Earlier, P.Shanmugam, state general secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, and K.P.Perumal, district secretary, spoke.

Rate of interest for loans for farm implements is higher than that of a vehicle loan

Farm operations set to begin in Guntur district

Cotton acreage could go up as prospects of an increase in prices are bright



A farmer ploughs the field at Sattenepalli in Guntur District.

With a near normal monsoon predicted during the kharif, all is set for farming operations to begin in the district. The normal cultivable area covers 5.50 lakh hectares and by the end of June, cultivation began in 23,508 hectares.

The farm lands have been tilled and made ready for the seedling stage. Sowing of Cotton has begun in parts of Palnadu where it is popularly called as summer cotton.

Joint Director of Agriculture, V. Sridhar said that cotton acreage could go up in the coming year as the prospects of an increase in prices are bright. Cotton has been sown in 7, 344 hectares in the district.

Paddy is expected to be sown in 2, 39, 916 hectares in the district. Redgram leads the pack in the food grain category with an expected acreage of 20,879 hectares. Chilli is expected to be sown in 63,499 hectares while cotton is

expected to be sown in 1.67 lakh hectares. Though the cost of cultivation of commercial crops has been on the rise, farmers still prefer for the remunerative prices. Cotton, chilli and turmeric continue to be in demand. The normal rainfall in the season is expected to touch 528.8 m.m. and in June the rainfall recorded was 43 p.c more than the normal rainfall, raising hopes of a good kharif.

Various agencies of the government have been involved in the distribution of seeds. Since the district is the home district of Agricultural Minister Kanna Lakshminarayana, the officials are on their toes to ensure that scarcity of seeds does not arise.

A wet spell might see a flurry of activity and once the water is released from Nagarjuna Sagar canal, farm operations are expected to pick up. Water is slated to be released from Nagarjuna Sagar on July 15.

Incentives for kuruvai cultivation

Under the special kuruvai crop scheme, certain incentives would be given to the farmers of the tail-end delta region, including Parangipettai, Mel Bhuvanagiri, Keerapalayam, Kattumannarkoil and Kumaratchi, according to R. Kirlosh Kumar, District Collector.

For facilitating uninterrupted irrigation, they would be given 865 units of HDPE pipe (high density polyethylene pipe) worth Rs. 1.73 crore free of cost.

For enriching the soil on 4,727 acres, a sum of Rs. 52.86 lakh has been allocated and for providing gypsum a sum of Rs. 33 lakh has been earmarked, he said in a release. — Special Correspondent

2.38 cr. released for horticulture farmers

A sum of Rs.2.38 crore has been released from the State Disaster Response Fund for the horticulture farmers in East Godavari district who lost their standing crop due to the Neelam cyclone that hit the district in November 2012. As per the

official estimates, horticulture standing crop in an extent of 2,388.29 hectares was damaged due to the cyclone. The amount will be credited into the bank accounts of 7,057 horticulture farmers within 90 days from now, according to an official release issued here on Monday.

Only rice to be given under Anna Bhagya for now'

Decision on including jowar will be taken later, says M.B. Patil

The government has decided to distribute only rice under the 'Anna Bhagya' scheme during the first three months of its launch, Minister for Medium and Major Irrigation M.B. Patil has said.

The decision about including other grains such as jowar, wheat or millets would be taken at a later stage, he said, while chairing the Karnataka Development Programme (KDP) review meeting here on Monday.

The decision to distribute only rice for the first three months was taken at a recent meeting in which Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Food and Civil Supplies Minister Dishesh R. Gundu Rao participated.

It may be pointed out that political leaders in north Karnataka had recently demanded that jowar, wheat or millets be distributed along with rice, under the public distribution system, to poor people.

"The government is well aware of the demand. However, it requires time to study the feasibility of including other grains. As of now, only rice will be distributed for first three months," he reiterated.

The government was not averse to distributing other food grains. Factors like availability of adequate quantity and ways and means to procure other grains should be thoroughly examined before deciding on distributing them under the public distribution system.

This process would take some time and therefore, a decision in this regard would be taken at a later stage, he explained.

'Prepare report'

Although he maintained that the government still had three months to decide about the issue, he instructed the departments of Agriculture and Food and Civil Supplies to prepare a report on the availability of jowar in the district, based on which a decision on its distribution among the poor could be taken.

"Prepare a detailed report and give it to me within a fortnight. I will take up the matter with the government," Mr. Patil said.

Meanwhile, an official of the Food and Civil Supplies Department said that the district would require more than 70,000 quintals of rice every month for distribution under the Anna Bhagya scheme of providing 30 kg rice at Re. 1 a kg to every below the poverty line family.

If jowar were to be distributed, approximately more than 34,000 quintals would be needed every month, provided that each BPL family was given only 10 kg jowar, the official said.

International meet on tubers

Nearly 250 delegates from across India and 40 from countries including the USA, UK, Colombia, Peru, China, Switzerland, Germany, Nigeria, Thailand, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are expected to participate in an international conference on Tropical Roots and Tubers for Sustainable Livelihood under Changing Agro-climate to be held here from July 9 to 12.

The international conference is being organised in connection with the golden jubilee celebrations of the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) here. Chief Minister Oommen Chandy will inaugurate the conference at Hotel Mascot in the city on Tuesday.

There will also be two special sessions at the international conference, one of which will be a satellite meeting to assess the research needs for roots, tubers, and bananas under a programme on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB).

— Special Correspondent

CAI estimates lower cotton production in 2012-13



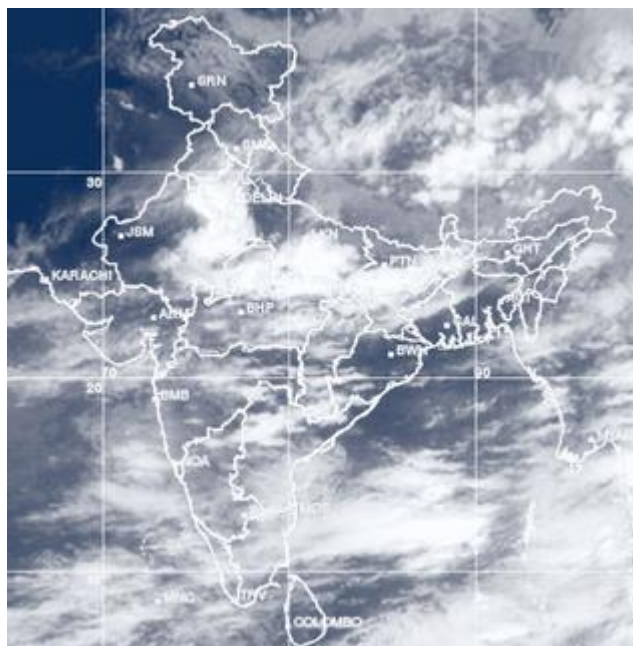
Cotton production is estimated to be lower at 355.25 lakh bales in the 2012-13 season ending September, compared to 373.25 lakh bales produced in 2011-12, according to industry data. Cotton season runs from October to September. Total cotton supply during the season is estimated at 423.46 lakh bales, including opening stock balance of around 53 lakh bales, the Cotton Association of India (CAI) said in its latest June forecast.

Domestic consumption is estimated at 283 lakh bales, and exports at 95 lakh bales, leaving the closing stock at 45.46 lakh bales, it said. Timely rains and the fast pace at which sowing of cotton was taking place bode well for a good crop during the 2013-14 crop year, according to CAI President Dhiren N. Sheth.

Arrivals as on June 30 were placed at 344.75 lakh bales. Gujarat continued to remain the largest producer with 85.75 lakh bales in 2012-13 (114 lakh bales in 2011-12).

Among other producers, Andhra Pradesh produced 75 lakh bales, Maharashtra (72 lakh bales), Haryana (24 lakh bales), Punjab (15.5 lakh bales), Karnataka (13 lakh bales) and Madhya Pradesh (18 lakh bales), the CAI said. — PTI

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on July 08th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	35	27	14	171
New Delhi (Sfd)	34	27	0	122
Chandigarh	32	27	0	315
Hissar	37	27	0	146
Bhuntar	28	21	6	201
Shimla	22	17	7	393
Jammu	32	23	47	232
Srinagar	33	18	8	63
Amritsar	34	24	30	176
Patiala	33	28	0	151
Jaipur	35	26	tr	182
Udaipur	32	26	9	173
Allahabad	37	28	11	441
Lucknow	33	24	1	340

Varanasi	35	28	0	256
Dehradun	30	23	130	1310
Agartala	33	26	0	405
Ahmedabad	34	26	0	272
Bangalore	26	21	0	190
Bhubaneshwar	36	24	0	321
Bhopal	31	25	0	547
Chennai	34	25	22	192
Guwahati	32	25	0	383
Hyderabad	31	23	tr	205
Kolkata	35	28	0	405
Mumbai	30	24	32	104
Nagpur	34	25	7	525
Patna	34	26	0	141
Pune	30	22	2	312
Thiruvananthapuram	29	23	5	560
Imphal	31	23	0	178
Shillong	26	19	8	397

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st June.

HEAT WAVE

Southwest Monsoon has been active in Himachal Pradesh. The axis of Monsoon trough at MSL passes through Ferozpur, Narnaul, Kanpur, Varanasi and thence east-wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand, at many places over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and east Rajasthan, at a few places over Uttar Pradesh and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (5 cm and above)

HIMACHAL PRADESH: Dharamshala and Ghamroor 11, Sujanpur tira 10, Pandoh 8, Amb 6, Paonta 5 each, JAMMU AND KASHMIR : Samba 6 and Jammu 5, PUNJAB: Madhopur and Kapurthala 7, Balachaur and Tarantara 6 each and Jalandhar and Samrala 5 each , EAST RAJASTHAN: Kathumer , Kumher, Sarmathura 8 each, Nagar and Asnawar 6 each, Baran, Chipabarod, Bharatpur, Jahazapur and Chothkabarwara 5 each. WEST RAJASTHAN: Bikaner tehsil 9 and Bikaner 6, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Hasanganj and Kakrahi 6 each and Bahraich, Neemsar, Haidergarh, Ram Sanehi Ghat, Malehabad, Fatehpur and Muhammadi 5 each, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Shahajanpur 14, bareilly 9, Kirawali 7, Moradabad and Agra 6 each and UTTARAKHAND: Dehradun 13, Mussoorie 7, Chamoli, Joshimath and Bhatwari 5 each.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 10th July 2013: Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Himachal Pradesh Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Punjab during next 24 hours and decrease thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and east Rajasthan during next 48 hours and decrease thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at isolated places over rest of the region.

HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING: Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir during next 24 hours, over Uttarakhand during next 48 hours and Uttar Pradesh during next 72 hours. Heavy to very heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh during next 24 hours and Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places during subsequent 48 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 10th July 2013: Generally cloudy sky. Rain/thundershowers may occur in some areas.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Noida farmers resist bid to takeover land

Farmers of villages near Sector 132 in Noida have alleged that officials of the Air Force and the Faridabad police on Monday damaged their houses and properties to take over farmland belonging to around five villages. The confrontation happened when farmers opposed officials from the takeover on the basis of a Punjab & Haryana High Court order of March issuing stay orders on the takeover of land.

"When we resisted officials from takeover of our land, they set a tractor on fire.

They damaged a few hutments which we had erected at the place apart from injuring a couple of farmers in the scuffle," said Ajit Singh Tomar, farmer leader of Chak Salarpur.

In March, farmers of Nangli Wajidpur, Shahpur Goverdhanpur, Nangli Nangla, Rohilapur and Sakhpur villages in Gautam Budh Nagar district had got a temporary reprieve from the Punjab & Haryana High Court from takeover of their land. The court had passed directions restraining harassment of any kind to farmers by way of forcible takeover of land till the matter was resolved.

"We have also filed a contempt application against the Air Force and the Haryana government having failed to honour the high court's orders," added Tomar.

Farmers had appealed in the Chandigarh high court against an order of the Faridabad district court last year, in which the contentious land was allowed to be taken over by the Indian Air Force. The land belongs to farmers in these villages, who claim to have bought it at a price of Rs 11,000 in the year 1977.

Subsequently, according to farmers, the land passed over to Haryana in the Alteration of Boundary Act in 1979.

Pricey vegetables leave a bitter taste

The recent price hike in vegetable prices has squeezed the flavour out of their taste buds for food loving Gujaratis. Prices of ginger, tomato, green chilly and onion have increased four times in the past three months. Since Monday, prices of other vegetables have started to come down but the four mentioned vegetables are still very expensive. For the first time, international market is affecting the local vegetable market.

Till April, price of ginger was around Rs 70 per kg but is currently at Rs 280 to 300 per kg. price of tomato was around Rs 15 to Rs 20 per kg but it is now between Rs 60 and 80. Another important ingredient, onion is witnessing an upward rise in prices. Onion is being sold at Rs 27 to Rs 32 per kg while it was at

Rs 7 to 10 per kg a few weeks ago. Green chilly was being sold at Rs 20 to Rs 22 per kg till April but is now sold at Rs 100 to Rs 105 per kg.

Vegetable vendors believe that tomato and chilly prices may start coming down during the week but ginger and onion prices are likely to remain high as factors affecting these vegetables are different. "Tomato and chilly crop is affected due to heavy rains and the normal supply will resume within next week. It is likely to normalize by next week but everything depends upon supply," said Bhadresh Photowala, a vegetable wholesaler.

In the case of ginger, prices may not come down soon, believe vegetable traders. Surat receives ginger supply from Maharashtra and Karnataka. Last year, due to bumper production, farmers did not receive good returns in ginger hence a large number of farmers shifted to other crop this year creating a short supply of ginger. "Further, ginger crops in northern states have been affected due to rain. Crops in China also got destroyed due to the rains, hence the export demand is high in northern states. These reasons have fuelled ginger prices," informed Vasant Patel, a vegetable vendor.

Price of onion is likely to go up further with Ramzan starting from this week. "With Ramzan export of onion to Middle East will start and it will push the prices further," said Photowala. By next month prices of ginger and onion are likely to come down, vegetable vendors believe.

Housewives are in search of other options to find an alternate to the high priced vegetables. "I use ginger powder prepared few months back and red chilly powder in place of high priced tasty vegetables. The price hike has squeezed taste out of home made food," said Sarita Sharma, a housewife.

Veggie prices climb the charts

Vegetable prices are spiraling upwards in the city, burning a hole in the pockets of residents. If the soaring rate of tomatoes is not enough, prices of potatoes and

onions too are climbing fast, leaving the buyers wondering which of these essential items to sacrifice for their meals.

Tomato is costing Rs 70-80 per kg. Worse, it could touch Rs 100 per kg next week, predict vendors. Prices of onion have doubled while that of potato tripled. Onions are costing Rs 30 per kg and potatoes Rs 30-35 per kg. That's not all. Prices of widely consumed vegetables have shot up during the last 10 days in most parts of the country. The rates of french bean have soared from Rs 25 to Rs 60 per kg, cauliflower from Rs 25 to Rs 50 per kg, capsicum from Rs 20 to Rs 50 per kg and peas from Rs 30 to Rs 70 per kg.

But what factors are triggering this hike? "As there is no warehouse facility for potatoes, the tubers are coming from cold storage units. Hence, they are costly. Tomatoes, peas and cauliflower are expensive as they are coming only from Himachal Pradesh. The price may go down after around 20 days when production from Nasik in Maharashtra will start coming in," explains Asish Kumar, a vegetable distributor in Sector 47, says

Desraj, president, Small Vegetable Seller Welfare Association, is blaming the weather. "The early arrival of monsoon has ruined the crop. The supply of vegetables has reduced from 10 kg to 2 kg, making it difficult to cater to the high demand. Tomatoes were coming from Uttarakhand too but now the supply has stopped due to transportation problem. There is even a possibility that its price may reach Rs 100 per kg."

Vendors also say they are helpless in controlling the price.

"It is not in our hands. As we are buying the vegetables at higher rates, we pass on the rate to consumers," says a vegetable vendor from Sector 36.

It is better to eat paneer, apples and mangoes in place of these expensive vegetables. Earlier, I used to buy vegetables for Rs 100 for my family of four in a day, but now with the same amount I just get tomatoes and onions

Reema Arora, Sector 35 resident | Chandigarh

Prices of vegetables have shot up to such an extent that switching over to pre-cooked and ready-to-eat food items is a better option now. **Veenu Pahwa, Sector 36 resident | Chandigarh**

The price rise is crossing my daily budget and this affects our monthly expenditure. We have to resort to buying cheaper varieties of vegetables. **Preeti, Sector 44 resident | Chandigarh**

"I am a caretaker at a paying guest accommodation and I belong to a lower income group. After the hike in the price of tomatoes, we have stopped their consumption. **Promila, Sector 34 resident | Chandigarh**

Shrinking farmhouses

With land becoming dearer in Gurgaon, applications for farmhouses have gone down significantly in recent years.

While the Directorate of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) approved only two such requests last year, not a single approval for change of land use from agriculture to farmhouse has been granted this year.

The DTCP has allowed 28 farmhouses in Gurgaon region, including Bhondsi village, over the last decade. Experts say, small farms — multiple farmhouses within a huge farmhouse — are becoming the need of the hour with rising cost of land. Many big builders, who own huge chunks of farmhouse land, are now selling smaller farmhouses to those who have deep pockets.

Between 2000 and 2005, the demand for farmhouses saw a surge in Gurgaon as land was relatively affordable in the district and the economy was booming. The same agricultural land now costs over Rs 3 crore per acre.

"At that time land cost was around Rs 3 lakh per acre. The ambience of the region played a big role in wooing industrialists and businessmen to Gurgaon farmhouses," said Mahinder Singh, who deals in agricultural and farmhouses

land.

Not just businessmen, but politicians and bureaucrats took away many of the farmhouses allotted between 2000 and 2005. "It was not only a status symbol but also an investment opportunity. Those in power booked most of the available land at that time," said another broker on condition of anonymity.

Most Gurgaon farmhouses are larger than Sanikfarms in Delhi. "Many owners brought farmhouses to live in a natural habitat in the most happening part of the NCR. These places are weekend retreat for those who can afford," said Narinder Sharma, a real estate consultant.

"Now the buyers mostly go for small farms in Gurgaon. These places have similar designs, but are not bigger than an acre. Some small farms are spread in just 2000 square yards. Apart from price factors, small farms are also getting popular because the buyers doesn't have to go through the bureaucratic process of getting change of land use permission," said Sanjay Dadhwal, another real estate consultant.

Andheri retailers cut rates as veggies subsidy scheme set for roll-out

On a day the state government decided not to wait for the chief minister to inaugurate its veggies-at-reduced-rates scheme, retailers outside one of the outlets where the subsidised vegetables are to be sold slashed prices by 50 per cent, providing proof that the rates had been artificially inflated.

After TOI reported on Monday how the scheme was waiting for CM Prithviraj Chavan to make time for a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony, the state decided to implement it from Tuesday. The state has added one more centre - a consumer store inside the Mantralaya compound - to the list of co-operative outlets where the veggies will be sold.

Reacting to the government's move, by Monday afternoon, greengrocers outside

the proposed subsidy centre at Andheri's Apna Bazar had halved rates to Rs 40-50 per kg and were pleading with customers to ignore the state outlet and buy from them instead. When this reporter approached them as a buyer, they not only decreased rates by the minute but offered 1 kg of lady finger, cluster beans (gavar), cauliflower, french beans and ridge gourd (karela) for Rs 40 per kg, after first quoting Rs 60.

"We are not scared of competition from the government. But compare prices at that centre and at my stall, and you will find I offer a better deal. More produce is flooding the market now that the rain has reduced, so naturally rates have begun to fall," one of the sellers said. The rates stood at Rs 80 per kg last week. Prices at this spot had fallen to Rs 60 within a day of the government's announcement. However, elsewhere in the city, where vendors are not in competition with the subsidised stalls, veggies continued to cost Rs 80 per kg.

Reader K A Viswanathan called from Matunga market and reported a vast difference in prices at Sahakari Bhandar, a co-operative store, near Aurora theatre and the retail market outside Matunga railway station on the Central Railway.

Near the station, tomato was selling at Rs 60 per kg, potato Rs 25, and onion Rs 30; even bitter gourd (karela) was priced at Rs 60. However, the co-operative store sold potato at Rs 19.50 per kg, onion at Rs 23 and cauliflower at Rs 39. Of course, the quality differed owing to poor storage and spoilage. "There are nearly 100 vegetable vendors near the railway station, and because the produce there is fresh, train commuters get off at Matunga station and buy vegetables," Viswanathan said. At Borivli east, all vegetables cost a notch higher than elsewhere. Sanjay Pansare, director of the APMC wholesale market, said each of the 11 subsidy centres would initially receive one tonne (1,000 kg) of supplies. "Of this, 500 kg will be mixed vegetables, 200 kg potato and 200 kg onion," he said. Apna Bazar's most popular outlet, in Andheri, barely requisitions half that

quantity every day. "We are receiving so many inquiries about this sale that we are hoping to empty out stocks. In a day or two, supply will be tailored to suit demand at each centre," said Anil Gangar, chairman of Apna Bazar.

Apna Bazar in Mulund will have special decoration, with government banners, lighting and special racks for stocking vegetables on sale. Uday Gandhi, assistant manager, said, "We have earmarked an open area near the entrance. We will have a huge rate card on display, lights, racks to store products, electronic weighing machines, and our men will regulate crowds."

Little rain, but monsoon is very much in Delhi

The monsoon arrived in Delhi on June 16 - or so the Met department had claimed. It's been a three-week dry spell since. Only on Monday did parts of Delhi get some rain. So, was the weatherman talking through the hat when he announced the arrival of monsoon in the capital?

Not really. The Met department wasn't wrong. The 'monsoon' doesn't necessarily mean rains. It is a wind system that had indeed reached Delhi and beyond but somehow the right conditions didn't show up in the capital region for rains, even though it was raining all around. Experts will tell you that every spell of rain isn't the monsoon, nor does monsoon necessarily mean rains.

Monsoons are a seasonal moisture-laden wind system that builds from the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal and crosses into the sub-continent. And it carries heavy rain clouds. It comes in waves: there are heavy spells of rains, often followed by lighter showers or dry spells. Just like the waves hitting the shores - advancing and receding.

So, the weatherman read the movement of the winds and correctly announced that the monsoon had arrived in the city on June 16. The problem lay in that, in common perception monsoon is equated with rains. In fact, the rains began with a bang in the capital. But after June 18, it has been mainly dry. Overcast

conditions, high humidity and a number of Met forecasts of rain notwithstanding, the skies have just not opened up with gusto in the past three weeks.

Does that indicate that monsoon has been weak over the region after the initial burst? Not really, say experts, adding that most parts of north India have got excess rainfall so far. Haryana (including Delhi and Chandigarh) and west Rajasthan are the only meteorological subdivisions which hasn't received excess rain (defined as 20% or more over the normal). Both subdivisions, however, have had normal rainfall.

Delhi has so far received 122mm rain since June 1, around 18mm more than the long term average till July 7 of 104.1mm (at Safdarjung). That, however, gives a slightly deceptive impression because 93.3mm rain fell during a four-day spell (June 15-18) that coincided with the arrival of monsoon in the region around two weeks ahead of schedule. It also coincided with record rains in Uttarakhand.

After June 18, the city has received just a few drizzles. "That's just a coincidence because on a number of occasions since June 18, conditions have been conducive for rains but somehow heavy showers have skipped the capital," said a Met department official.

Early last week, the regional Met office (RMC) in Delhi forecast reasonably heavy showers (30 to 40mm every day) for July 5-7.

"The forecast was based on the imminent collision between a wind system coming from the west and the monsoon system. But the impact of the interaction was less than what we anticipated," an RMC official said.

Officials, however, said these misses are common in a complex wind system such as the monsoon. "Monsoon winds blow in from the Arabian Sea as well as the Bay of Bengal. As these winds cover the entire country, a line called the monsoon trough is formed that separates the westerly winds (from Arabian Sea) from the easterly (from Bay of Bengal)," said D Sivananda Pai, IMD lead

monsoon forecaster.

Easterly winds blow in the region above the trough and winds from Arabian Sea dominate in the areas south of the trough. "In its normal position, the trough goes through central India. But it moves north and south. Generally, regions immediately north of the trough get good rains," Pai said.

Copious rains take place when a low pressure system coincides with the monsoon trough. Same is the case when a western disturbance — moisture-laden winds coming in from Pakistan — meets the monsoon trough.

"Of course, there are many other complexities that can enter the system. In a way, each year's monsoon is unique. That we can predict it with a reasonable degree of accuracy is quite remarkable," said a senior weather expert.

Bundelkhand farmers' suicide pushes SBI NPA by Rs 303 cr

An Allahabad High Court order restraining nationalized banks from using coercion to recover agricultural loans after a PIL was filed based on a TOI report about the spate of suicides by farmers in Bundelkhand region due to indebtedness has resulted in State Bank of India accumulating arrears of Rs 303 crore.

SBI said the banking system had come under strain as just five years back, the government's loan waiver scheme had forced nationalized banks to write off Rs 585.27 crore for over 3 lakh small and marginal farmers in Bundelkhand. In addition, another Rs 154.35 crore of outstanding loans were written off by regional rural banks around the same time.

The biggest nationalized bank in the country could no longer take the burden of non-performing assets accruing from seven districts of Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh and moved the Supreme Court on Monday seeking expeditious hearing of its appeal and requesting an urgent stay to start recovery of loans. Attorney general G E Vahanvati mentioned the SBI's application for urgent hearing before a bench of Chief Justice Altamas Kabir, F M I Kalifulla and

Vikramjit Sen and the court agreed to hear the petition on July 11.

The PIL before the HC was filed based on TOI's June 14, 2011 story titled 'Hope Dries in Parched Land: 519 suicides in 5 months'. On June 15, the HC issued notices to the Centre and the state and passed an interim ex-parte order directing the state and all banks not to take any coercive step to recover outstanding agricultural loans from farmers.

"The result of the ex-parte interim order passed by the HC is that even the borrowers who can afford to pay back the money have stopped paying their installments taking benefit of said order," the SBI said in its appeal filed through advocate Sanjay Kapur.

"In the Bundelkhand region alone (comprising seven districts of UP), the agricultural NPA of petitioner bank has risen unprecedentedly to a sum of Rs 303 crore as on March 31, 2013 and is stuck as bad loan," it said.

The SBI said the government and the Reserve Bank of India had not been oblivious to the hardship of farmers facing drought and had been laying down norms for recovery for the entire banking industry from time to time.

"For alleviating the plight of distressed farmers, the government of India launched the 'Agriculture Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008' providing relief to farmers, especially small and marginal farmers who were in distress on account of indebtedness due to crop failure or natural calamities," it said.

"In Bundelkhand region alone, the unpaid dues of 2,15,057 small and marginal farmers amounting to Rs 389.32 crore and 98,193 other farmers amounting to Rs 198.95 crore were waived and cleared under the scheme. Further, regional rural banks in Bundelkhand region alone have waived/cleared the unpaid dues of Rs 110.10 crore and Rs 44.25 crore of small and marginal farmers and other farmers respectively," it said.

"The loans given by the banks to its customers are out of the deposits garnered from its customers. Banks are under an obligation as well as legally bound to

repay its depositors when demanded by them. In the event of non-recovery of loans extended by the banks, the banking system would be under stress," the bank added.

Wheat scam worth Rs 3 cr detected

After paddy, wheat scam worth Rs 3 crore has been detected by the administration and show cause notices against three officers including district supply officers and procurement in-charge have been slapped for their involvement in the scam. The reply of show cause is returnable within 24 hours, DPRO Ravi Bhushan Sahay confirmed on Sunday.

The DPRO said after a complaint regarding scam in wheat procurement during 2012-13 fiscal in Rajpur block of the district, a joint team consisting of district manager of the State Food Corporation and a senior deputy collector made physical verification of the procured wheat stock at Rajpur centre on the Rohtas DM's directive.

During the verification, the inquiry team was shocked to find that 22874.72 quintal wheat worth Rs 3 crore was missing from the godown, and the centre in-charge, Virendra Kumar Singh, failed to give satisfactory reply as to the details of the missing wheat. The team, in its inquiry report submitted to the DM, revealed that altogether 49,106 quintal wheat was procured by the SFC, the sole nodal agency, from farmers and PACS of Rajour block.

Of these, 25,955 quintals were handed over to Food Corporation of India. The remaining wheat stock should have been 23,151 quintal but during physical verification, only 276.28 quintal was found in the godown.

After the report, the administration swung into action and found three officers, centre in-charge Virendra Kumar Singh, the then land acquisition officer Arun Kumar Jha (who was senior in-charge of the centre) and district supply officer

Pramod Kumar involved in the scam. Sources said like paddy, wheat was also procured on paper and money withdrawn on forged signature of the farmers. Sources said that involvement of other officers concerned could not be ruled out in the scam.

The vigilance department probing the multi-crore paddy procurement scam in the district, in its preliminary inquiry, has found the involvement of many officers, right from the block level to district level in the scam. It is learnt that in the paddy procurement scam, order for lodging FIR against the centre in-charge of Karahgar has already been issued by the DM last Thursday.

Red okra, fine grain make a comeback into kitchens

In research conducted over the past few years, Avadi-based nutrition scientist Salome Yesudas has documented 93 varieties of native "lost" greens as she calls them. "More than 60 years ago, they were eaten because of their medicinal and nutritional value. Today, they are ignored or discarded as weeds," says Yesudas, who regularly conducts cooking workshops across the city and organizes daily sales of around 35 varieties of "country" greens — specifically spinaches and 'amaranthe' — at specific locations through the volunteer-driven organization Nalla Keerai.

In Royapuram, rice merchant Ganesan KC packages "healthy" grains he sources from farmers in villages. Ganesan, who learned about indigenous grains not found in the cities anymore, three months ago decided to sell them through his Sri Sai Nirvagam. "They were part of the staple diet centuries ago. Hopefully, people will see the value in them again," says Ganesan, whose regular customers carry his rice — the most popular among them being the teeny-grained 'guthirai valli arasi' — overseas to gift to relatives.

For a couple of years now, Medavakkam-based terrace garden enthusiast A M

Malathy has been searching villages for seeds and saplings of vegetables no longer found in the city. So far, her hunt has yielded red okra (lady's finger), red beans and an unusual tuber called 'vetrillai valli kilangu'. "My grandparents would talk about the benefits of native vegetables. I was reminded about them when I visited a village," says Malathy, who sells her finds at some organic outlets in the city.

The number of enthusiasts trying to pluck vintage vegetables out of obscurity and return them to the menu is, sadly, too small, according to Thanjavur-based organic paddy cultivator and naturopath G Sither. Agricultural consultant S Krishnan puts the number of pure organic farmers at 50, most of them in the deep south or in the Nilgiris.

"The current technologies used in agriculture have starved out natural traditional varieties which a few of us are trying to revive.... some of these varieties of vegetables are disappearing from villages too," says Sither, who uses "country" vegetables like pink and red bindi, paloor brinjal and ramar brinjal (called so because of its green blue shade) in his naturopathy practice.

The supply of native vegetables, say organic store owners, is just a trickle of the actual demand. At organic store Dhanyam, the 12 varieties of native spinach sourced from various regions make their appearance in the store every Saturday at 10.30am. They are sold out by 11 am. "We have customers come in for specific greens like 'chakravarthy keerai', the kidney-shaped 'keerai'," says Thendral Madhusudan, who owns Dhanyam.

Chandrika, a spinach regular at Dhanyam for the last three years, says her cook gets excited whenever she buys a native vegetables. "I can say they taste very different from what one buys at departmental stores. My cook sometimes says she has not seen some of these grains since she left her village as a child," says Chandrika.

Executive Chef Praveen Anand of Sheraton Park Hotel and Towers, who

researches ancient Tamil cuisine, says that whenever he chances upon a native green or grain, he tries to incorporate it into the hotel menu, sometimes experimenting with it in different ways. "Kuppa keerai", for instance, is mentioned in Sangam literature. I chanced upon it once and cooked with it. From its taste, you can sense its medicinal value. More recently, I made a successful pairing of Ganesan's rice 'guthirai valli arasi' with mutton curry," says Anand.

Students transplant rice, learn first-hand about farmers' woes

A week into their post-graduate mass media course, the students at Sophia Polytechnic piled into a bus and set off for Kamshet. Any other Saturday during the year would have had the class of 40 attending lectures or working long hours on projects, but this weekend was earmarked for transplanting rice seedlings at a farm outside the city.

"Transplanting is considered the hardest part of rice cultivation," said Dr Sunitha Chitrapu, head of the Social Communications Media (SCM) department at the polytechnic. "We wanted the kids to understand that food doesn't come from a supermarket or a baniya's shop, but from the farms." The back-breaking task of planting rows of saplings and wading through knee-deep slush had been an enlightening experience for last year's class, when the project was first undertaken. The faculty hoped the current batch too would get a hands-on understanding of the labour that went into stocking urban supermarkets.

"I had first seen (rice-transplanting) as a task for contestants on a reality show," said Abhra Das. "Actually doing it is a completely different matter. Your feet constantly sink in the mud." The students had to keep in mind that the saplings' roots weren't damaged by pushing them forcefully through the soil. But not too gently either because they would rise up and float away. "When we were told about (the trip), we thought, who does that?" said Deepshikha Dhankar, laughing. The students will be writing about their experiences on this excursion, and

Dhankar said this was one assignment she was more than happy to do.

The Social Communications Media course has been known for producing several journalists, film editors and documentary-makers over the last three decades. It was in the news recently, with the previous batch's students winning awards for the annual magazine, and the department accepting male students for the first time this year. "SCM has had a tradition of women empowerment," said Chitrapu. "But we felt it was time to start a dialogue with young men, and get their perspective on gender issues." Part of the 40 seats was reserved for male candidates, though the exact proportion hasn't been fixed yet.

The fact that there are more media schools and better career opportunities for women today also added to the decision, felt film teacher and former department head Jeroo Mulla. Back when the course started, having a women-centric space was crucial, with male students dominating most other institutes. "We have been gender-sensitizing women for years," Mulla said. "Now we have allowed men into the course and hopefully, they too will get gender-sensitized."

Food security law to be launched on Rajiv's birth anniversary in Congress-ruled Delhi

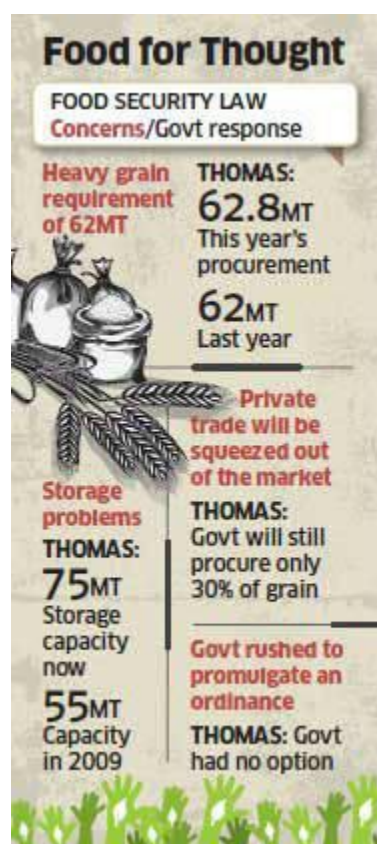
Congress-ruled Delhi and Karnataka will take the lead in kicking off the populist food security law, starting with the poll-bound national Capital on August 20, the birth anniversary of Rajiv Gandhi, Food Minister KV Thomas told ET.

In a candid interview, he also defended the decision to promulgate an ordinance for the ambitious welfare programme championed by Sonia Gandhi. He said the government had no choice as BJP, which had obstructed Parliament in the past when the bill should have been discussed, was neither prepared to advance the next session of Parliament, nor could it guarantee a discussion on the matter when the House is convened.

Thomas also said Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar was "100% in favour" of the new law, although he had suggested that the food security law must be

accompanied with productivity-boosting measures and technologies such as genetically modified (GM) crops.

He said states had the key role in implementing the new law. "This is the beginning. Today I discussed this with Sheila Dikshit. She proposed that by August 20 we will implement the food security law. Karnataka is also ready." But Thomas said he did not know what the BJP-ruled states were planning.



The food security law is widely seen as a key poll plank for the ruling Congress party for the next general elections due in 2014, but Thomas said the decision was in line with his party's known position. "People know that the UPA is pro-poor. It is a huge responsibility. It has nothing connected with the elections. Let the people of the country assess and analyse it. Indian voters are very intelligent."

Thomas said the UPA government had consulted every political party, and cabinet ministers were given the responsibility to talk to various parties.

"Chidambaram, Shinde, Kamal Nath and I were given the task of talking to political parties. Shinde and Kamal Nath had to talk to Left and BJP," Thomas said. He said the Left parties wanted universal coverage under the act

while BJP wanted the Chhattisgarh model (of PDS). "They did not agree to have the session in advance. They did not guarantee that there would be a discussion in Parliament. So we did not have any option but to go for an ordinance," he said.

Thomas did not say which political parties he discussed the food law with. The minister also said he agreed with Pawar's concerns. "100%, not 1%, in favour.

Only he said agriculture production has to be sustained and investment should be negligible. That was his only concern. This is true. I also share with him. Finally, we sit together and come to a common understanding. That doesn't mean that he agrees on everything. He is leading a different political party ... He said there should be new technology like GMs and farmers should get better prices," Thomas said. He said the Opposition parties need to be consistent in their stand because the government had adopted the views of Parliament's standing committee.

"After introducing the bill on December 22, 2011, in Lok Sabha, the speaker referred it to the standing committee on January 5, 2012. The standing committee took about one year. They were unanimous in their opinion, except CPM asking for universal coverage. Otherwise, all recommendation of the standing committee was one. The committee gave recommendations on January 17, 2013. We accepted all the proposals... All Opposition members are in the standing committee. So can they take one stand in the committee and another in Parliament?"

hindustantimes.com

Weather Chennai

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Tuesday, Jul 9

Max Min

33° | 27°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:48

Humidity: 66

Sunset: 06:39

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Jul 10

Max Min

33° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Jul 11

Jul 12

Jul 13

Jul 14

Jul 15



33° | 26°

Cloudy



32° | 25°

Overcast



33° | 25°

Overcast



33° | 25°

Overcast



32° | 25°

Overcast

Weather Airport

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:30

Humidity: 84

Sunset: 07:22

Wind: normal

Barometer: 999

THE HINDU Business Line

Green gold



Few takers: Fruits and vegetable prices in the Capital have surged in view of heavy rainfall across the country. According to industry chamber Assocham, a large number of families are finding it difficult to run their kitchens and are opting for pre-cooked or ready-to-eat meals. — Kamal Narang

Fishing in untroubled waters



Fishermen at Pallana in Alappuzha setting out to reel in the Chaakara

In the turbulent Arabian Sea off the Kerala shore, a vast pool of amazingly calm surface waters is formed. The water is muddy. Huge shoals of prawns and fishes surge to the surface from the bottom of the relatively shallow sea.

The fishes and prawns are so plenty that “you feel you could pick them up with your bare hands”. It’s *Chaakara*.

unique phenomenon

Chaakara is a unique Kerala-specific marine phenomenon: it brings forth a sudden, abundant collection of fishes and prawns at certain patches in the sea close to the shore during the South-West monsoon.

To the joy of the fishing community, this monsoon, it has taken place at several spots close to the central Kerala shoreline. It was spotted off Kochi early last week. Two weeks ago, huge pools of fishes and prawns were found off Chavakkad and Alappuzha, and the fisherfolk made good use of them.

In the Kochi area, about 200 *valloms* (motorised canoes) were able to catch *poovaalan chemmeen* (a small-size prawn, *Metapenaeus dobsoni*) as well as sardines, mackerels and a dozen other types of fishes on a single day.

“Some *valloms* could catch about Rs 5 lakh worth of *poovaalan chemmeen* each,” said K.J. Antony, Ernakulam district president of Matsya Thozhilali Union, a fish workers’ union. Because of the monsoon ban on trawling, mechanised boats could not capture the bounty.

Charles George, a fishing union leader, said that the monsoon season would see several more *Chaakarā*sites as the conditions ripen.

“Heavy arrivals have brought down the on-the-shore price of prawns to around Rs 150 a kg,” V.J. Antony, a trader-middleman, told *Business Line*. In the retail market, the price is Rs 300 a kg.

Seafood processors and exporters are buying up prawns to cash in on the cheap arrivals. (In the last financial year, more than a half of India’s marine export dollars came from shrimps and prawns.)

In Malayalam, the word *Chaakara* is a synonym for abundance and windfall. However, the bounty occurs for only a few days, and not every year.

The phenomenon happens only in Kerala's waters, along a stretch of nearly 270 km from Alappuzha to Kozhikode. It takes place within 10 km from the shore and at a depth of 2-20 metres.

What scientists think

Marine biologists and geologists have investigated *Chaakara* (also called mud bank formation), but are yet to come up with a satisfactory explanation. "There are several scientific theories about mud bank formation," said Dr. V. Kripa, Principal Scientist and Head of the Fisheries Environment Division at the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute.

The science is pretty much complex. Dr Kripa pointed out that several natural factors such as sea currents, wind circulation, sediments on the seabed, suspension of fine sand and up-welling were all involved in the formation of mud banks and calming of the surface waters.

Kerala, she noted, has a lot of rivers and streams that wash off the clay, fine sand and soil from the hills and plains into the near-shore.

There is also a subterranean flow from the backwaters to the sea that carries sand and soil particles. This helps in the accumulation of organic matter in calm regions of the sea during the monsoon and attracts fish.

Since the muddy waters at the bottom of the sea contain less oxygen, fishes and prawns swim up to the surface to catch a breath.

However, seasoned fishermen have a different take: the rich nutrients in the wash-off from the rivers and backwaters attract fishes to the calm area formed in the sea.

Not the whys and hows bother them. When nature offers a bounty, it makes sense to fish out.

Cardamom slips below Rs 550/kg as arrivals rise



Cardamom lost flavour last week on increased arrivals and consequent bearish sentiment among buyers at auctions.

Market sources told *Business Line* that an increase in the arrival of new capsules may have had an impact on buyers, with projections that the new crop will be better than the previous one. On Sunday, quality arrivals outnumbered inferior ones, the sources said.

While, as a result, prices improved over Saturday's, overall, the market showed a declining trend as all purchases were for immediate requirements only. Buyers deferred further purchases anticipating a fall in prices in the coming days, as harvesting reaches its full swing.

Currently, the first round of picking is under way and indications are that the coming rounds will offer better quality capsules, they said.

Exporters are said to have bought an estimated 30 tonnes of cardamom last week. They were buying 6.5 mm and above green bold capsules at Rs 650 a kg,

the sources said. Individual auction average price was vacillating between Rs 505 and Rs 565 a kg last week.

The arrival of carry-forward stocks had dropped to negligible levels, they said. As the weather conditions are favourable, the next crop is expected to be better than that of the current season, according to the sources. Superior quality bold capsules would start coming in only in the second round of picking, which might begin from mid-August, they said.

Total arrivals at the Sunday auction held by KCPMC increased to 71.7 tonnes from 54 tonnes on the previous Sunday and almost the entire quantity was sold out, P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*.

Auction average price

The maximum price was Rs 821 a kg and the minimum at Rs 392 a kg. The auction average price was at Rs 535.59 against Rs 569.93 a kg at the previous Sunday's auction, he said.

Total arrivals and sales during the current season that began in August were 15,432 tonnes and 14,785 tonnes, respectively. Last year's figures stood at 19,773 and 19,000. The weighted average price as on July 7, 2013 was Rs 696 a kg against Rs 636.26 a kg as on the same date last year.

Prices of graded varieties slipped last week and at the weekend their per kg prices were: AGEB 780-790; AGB 580-600; AGS 580-590; and AGS -1: 550-560.

The weather conditions continued to remain favourable. However, the growing areas continued to receive excess rains last week, the sources said.

Spot rubber up on short supply

Domestic rubber prices resumed their upward journey on Monday.

According to sources, sentiments were driven by acute short supplies as the inflow of the raw material continued to be dull. Though buyers were keeping a low profile, it was more than enough to absorb the extremely thin arrivals in the local scene.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 191 (Rs 190) a kg, according to traders. The grade closed firm at Rs 190 (Rs 189), as quoted by the Rubber Board.

July futures flared up to Rs 193.30 (Rs 191.38), August to Rs 189.60 (Rs 186.54), September to Rs 182 (Rs 178.37), October to Rs 176.50 (Rs 172.50), November to Rs 174 (Rs 171.92) and December to Rs 173.10 (Rs 172) for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) increased to Rs 160.24 (Rs 159.87) a kg at Bangkok. July futures weakened to to ¥ 237 (Rs 142.41) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs/kg) were : RSS-4: 191 (190); RSS-5: 181 (180); Ungraded: 171 (170); ISNR 20: 171 (170) and Latex 60 per cent: 138.50 (136.50).

Cotton body ups crop estimate

The Cotton Association of India has marginally increased its cotton crop estimate for the 2012-13 season ending September to 355.25 lakh bales (lb) against 352 lb estimated last month. The projected balance sheet drawn by the association for 2012-13 estimated total cotton supply at 423.46 lb, while the domestic consumption is estimated at 283 lb and export at 95 lb. This leaves a closing stock of 45.46 lb. Arrivals as on June 30 were put at 344.75 lb. The timely rain and fast progress in sowing bodes well for the crop output next season, said an association press release on Monday. — **Our Bureau**

Chamraj Tea tops again at Coonoor auction

For the third consecutive week, Chamraj Estate topped Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions with its prices also increasing week after week.

At Sale No: 27, its Orange Pekoe orthodox leaf grade fetched Rs 265 a kg against Rs 256 last week and Rs 220 a fortnight ago.

“This consistent high price is a reflection of Chamraj’s high-grown orthodox tea matching the quality expectations of importers arising from 90 years of service to the global tea trade. Chamraj tea conforms to fair-trade, ethical partnership and Rain Forest Alliance norms besides ISO certification,” D. Hegde, a member of Tea Board’s Tea Council of South India monitoring exports, told *Business Line*.

Among other orthodox teas, Highfield Estate got Rs 185, Havukal Rs 178 and Kairbetta Rs 177. In all, 36 marks got Rs 125 and more per kg.

Crosshill Estate topped the CTC market. “Our Pekoe Dust topped at Rs 177. Five of our premium grades fetched Rs 158 and more,” said Crosshill’s Operations Head, Dinesh Raju.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the CTC leaf market at Rs 166. Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 170, Hittakkal Estate Rs 165 and Shanthi Supreme Rs 162. In all, 53 marks got Rs 125 and more per kg.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging from Rs 70 to Rs 75 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 115-150 for brighter liquoring sorts. They ranged from Rs 75 to 82 for plain dusts and Rs 120-160 for brighter liquoring dusts.

Govt should not be in dairy business: Amul chief

Vipul Chaudhary

The Government should exit the dairy business by disinvesting Mother Dairy and hand it over to co-operatives, said Vipul Chaudhary, Chairman of Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation, which owns the Amul brand.

“The Government should not be in the business of running dairies...or for that matter any business,” Chaudhary told reporters recently. “When Mother Dairy was formed, the consumers needed good quality milk, farmers needed a market

and so that was a relevant time. But, what is the relevance today? The Government can't be losing money for no good a reason," he said.

Mother Dairy, formed in 1974 under the Operation Flood Programme, is owned by the National Dairy Development Board. It operates largely in Delhi-NCR and parts of Mumbai, Saurashtra and Hyderabad. Apart from dairy products, it sells vegetables and edible oils in some markets.

"When the Government is disinvesting in other sectors, why not look at Mother Dairy?" asked Chaudhary. "It should be given to the co-operatives who have paid for the loans of Mother Dairy."

He said non-availability of finance at lower interest rates was among the big challenges faced by dairy co-operatives these days.

"The national dairy board used to provide finance earlier for the dairy industry, but now we are forced to take loans from elsewhere," he said, reiterating the demand that at least the co-operative dairies should be included in the priority sector lending.

Chaudhary, who is also the Chairman of Dudhsagar Dairy, said his co-operative had raised about Rs 210 crore from banks to fund the first phase of the recently-set up Dudhmotisagar Dairy at Dharuhera in Haryana. The dairy will eventually have a capacity to process about 30 lakh litres of milk a day.

"Why is the national dairy board not financing us... Is it because we are competing against them," Chaudhary wondered. Amul fiercely competes with Mother Dairy in Delhi-NCR, considered to be the fastest growing market for milk and milk products.

Amul, which made an entry into the NCR about a decade ago with sales of one lakh litres in 2003, has rapidly grown to 24 lakh litres a day. The total market for milk sold in pouches in Delhi is estimated at 50 lakh litres a day.

Amul has expressed interest in acquiring the facilities of Delhi Milk Scheme, under the Agriculture Ministry, to operate on a long-term basis.

Edible oils steam on weak rupee



Weak domestic currency helped edible oils gain on Monday despite subdued demand on the oils and oilseeds market. As stronger dollar makes import costlier, local refineries increased their rates for imported oils by Rs 12-15 for 10 kg that pushed up soyabean refined oil by Rs 10, sunflower oil by Rs 10-15 and palmolein by Rs 7 in Mumbai markets. Rapeseed oil inched up by Rs 5.

With outlook being positive for the kharif crop, groundnut and cotton oil ruled steady. A broker said that the drop in the rupee is the driving force of the uptrend in edible oils. Soyabean arrivals were about 90,000-95,000 bags and its prices were Rs 3,500-3,600 a quintal ex-mandi and Rs 3,700-50 for plant delivery. Mustard seeds arrivals were 1 lakh bags and the prices were Rs 3,080-3,600.

Towards the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 550-552, super palmolein Rs 587 and super deluxe Rs 607. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 555 for July 18, soyabean refined oil Rs 670 for July-August and sunflower refined oil Rs 821 for July. Allana's rate for palmolein was Rs 549-552 and for super palmolein Rs 585. Gokul was quoting palmolein at Rs 550 for July 15.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil dropped by Rs 30 to Rs 1,480 for *teli* tin and by Rs 25 to Rs 950 for loose (10 kg).

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil August contracts settled lower at MYR 2,378 (MYR 2,385), September at MYR 2,376 (MYR 2,385) and October at MYR 2,369 (MYR 2,379) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: groundnut oil 975 (975), soya refined oil 670 (660), sunflower exp. ref. 755 (745), sunflower ref. 820 (805), rapeseed ref. oil 695 (690), rapeseed expeller ref. 665 (660) cottonseed ref. oil 665 (665) and palmolein 542 (535).

Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai quoted Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 590 for 10 kg - July delivery.

Pepper mixed in futures trade, firm in spot



Pepper prices showed different trends on the National Multi Commodity Exchange and the IPSTA (Indian Pepper and Spices Trading Association). Active contracts rose on NMCE but dropped on IPSTA.

Spot prices remained unchanged at the previous day closing levels. Activities were limited as is evident from the turnover and the net open interest on the national exchange.

Hence, the rise in prices is attributed to the buy and sell exercise, aimed at availing of the benefit from the disparity in the daily price band of 4 per cent as against the IPSTA's Rs 500 fluctuation a day, market sources told *Business Line*.

Due to heavy rains in the growing areas, especially the high ranges, movement of the material has been hampered, they said.

As a result, arrival of pepper from the growing areas has been negligible, they said.

Weakening of the rupee against the dollar has made imports more costly and hence, demand from the value addition industry is also likely to pick up in the domestic market, they said.

Upcountry demand is also expected to be good, they said.

Indian parity is at \$7,125 (c&f) for Europe and \$7,275 a tonne (c&f) for the US.

On the NMCE, July and Aug contracts were up by Rs 541 and Rs 309 to close at Rs 40,900 and Rs 40,950 a quintal respectively. Sep was down by Rs 387 to close at Rs 39,940.

On the IPSTA, all the active contracts, July, Aug and Sep lost Rs 500, Rs 491 and Rs 491 respectively to close at Rs 39,274, Rs 38,538 and Rs 38,541 a quintal.

Total turnover on the NMCE moved up by two tonnes to 34 tonnes. Total net open interest dropped by five tonnes to 120 tonnes. Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 38,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 40,500 (garbled) a quintal on limited activities.

Poor quality takes colour off turmeric



Spot turmeric prices declined due to poor demand from North India and low quality arrivals.

“Despite decrease in arrival, sales and prices were down. This is due to poor upcountry demand and also quality. Farmers brought only 3,998 bags against 6,500 bags last week and only 1,300 bags were sold,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Buyers interested in the hybrid finger variety quoted lower price for want of good quality.

But in the Regulated Market Committee, the medium quality finger variety arrived for sale and the buyers purchased more than 170 bags.

Overall, the finger variety decreased by Rs 200 a quintal and the root variety Rs 150. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,119-6,894 a quintal; the root variety Rs 4,011-5,895.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 5,699-7,889; the root variety Rs 5,424-6,184. Of the 722 bags that arrived, only 270 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety ruled at Rs 6,150-7,001; the root variety Rs 4,667-6,166. Of the 411 bags on offer, 263 found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,609-6,642; the root variety Rs 4,867-5,639. Of the a 511 put up for sale, 393 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 5,806-6,942 and the root variety Rs 5,117-5,969. All the 306 bags were traded.

Range-bound trading likely in rice



Rice market may rule range-bound in the coming days as bulk buyers are keeping out of the market, said trade experts.

After witnessing a fall last weekend, Pusa-1121 varieties improved marginally, while all the other aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties managed to maintain their previous levels despite slack trading, on Monday.

Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that some fresh buying pushed Pusa-1121 variety marginally up by Rs 30-50 a quintal.

There is no bulk buying in the market at present as traders have adopted a wait-and-watch policy following too much volatility in the market in the recent past, he added.

An uptrend of Rs 30-50 a quintal wouldn't make much difference and market may continue to rule around current levels with marginal fluctuations this week, said Amit Chandna.

In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) recovered by Rs 50 to Rs 7,500-7,600, while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 7,030, up Rs 30 from previous levels. Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 8,800-8,820. Duplicate basmati (steam) sold at Rs 6,700. For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Dubar quoted at Rs 3,900, Tibar sold at Rs 4,400, while Mongra was at Rs 3,050 a quintal.

In the non-basmati section, Sharbati and PR varieties ruled flat despite lack of buying. Sharbati (Steam) sold at Rs 4,750-4,770, while Sharbati (Sela) quoted at Rs 4,400.

Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,300-2,350 while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,300 . PR-11 (sela) sold at Rs 3,000 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,750. PR14 (steam) sold at Rs 3,300 a quintal.

Huge carryover stocks mar soya's prospects



Even as a majority of mandis in Madhya Pradesh remained closed on Monday on account of '*Somwati Amawsya*,' soyabean in private trading ruled stable at Rs 3,700-50 (up Rs 100 from last week) a quintal on subdued demand.

In the futures market, however, soyabean showed a mixed trend in July and October contracts on the NCDEX closing at Rs 3,688 a quintal (up Rs 16) on rise in buying support at lower rate and Rs 3,140 (down Rs 15).

Soyabean's plant deliveries also ruled stable at Rs 3,725-75 a quintal.

Any bullish trend in soyabean appears unlikely, given ample carryover stock and report of higher soyabean sowing so far.

In Madhya Pradesh, almost 90 per cent of sowing has been completed. Given the hike in support price of soyabean, sowing is expected to increase by 7-10 per cent, said Rajesh Agrawal, spokesperson, Soyabean Processors Association of India.

With expected rise in sowing area, arrival in mandis across Madhya Pradesh in the recent past has increased, leading to sluggish trend in its prices, said a trader.

Soya oil gained marginally with rupee sliding against dollar on Monday. Soya refined ruled at Rs 659-60 for 10 kg (Rs 655-58), while soya solvent ruled at Rs 625-27 for 10 kg (Rs 622-26).

In futures however, soy oil showed a mixed trend with its July and August contracts on the NCDEX closing at Rs 690.30 for 10 kg (up Rs 1.35)) and Rs 683 (down Rs 1.15).

Soyameal was stable at Rs 33,200-300 a quintal on subdued demand, while it was Rs 35,300-500 on the port.

Sugar inventory bulges in markets



Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market ruled steady on Monday on routine local demand.

Naka rates increased by Rs 10 a quintal for bold variety on higher demand, while it dropped by Rs 10 for fair quality on increased selling.

Mill tender rates were unchanged as producers continued to sell in absence of upcountry buying.

Market may be range-bound as supply outstrips demand. Demand for Ramzan and *Ashadhi Ekadashi* still remained subdued.

A wholesaler said, "The demand for festivals is not as expected. Ample supply from producers continued leading to build up of inventory in the market. Sugar prices in other markets rule at par with Maharashtra's parity diverting their buying at nearby places. Last week, sugar prices rose due to the Government's decision to hike import duty on sugar to 15 per cent".

Sources said that Vashi market currently carries more than 120-125 truckloads of inventory, producers are selling continuously, supply is ample and local demand is still routine. Freight rates were steady higher level.

Last week from Kolhapur – Karad line freight rates went up by Rs 10-12 a bag.

Arrivals at Vashi market declined to 64-65 truckloads (of 100 bags each) while local dispatches were 63-64 loads.

On Saturday, about 11-12 mills offered tenders and sold about 34,000-35,000 bags to local traders at Rs 2,940-3,000 (Rs 2,940-3,000) for S-grade and Rs 3,040-3,120 (Rs 3,040-3,120) for M-grade.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 3,066-3,145 (Rs 3,070-3,146) and M-grade Rs 3,202-3,311 (Rs 3,202-3,311).

Naka delivery rates were: S-grade Rs 3,010-3,080 (Rs 3,020-3,070) and M-grade Rs 3,120-3,230 (Rs 3,130-3,220).

Business Standard

Castorseed improve by 1.4% on fresh buying

Most active near August contract too moved up by 1.18%

Castorseed prices rose by Rs 52 to Rs 3,578 per quintal in future trade today on fresh buying by traders on the back of firm physical market sentiments.

Marketmen said increased buying by traders, directed by firm spot market sentiment on pick up in demand amid restricted supply, mainly led rise in future prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, castorseed prices for July contract improved by Rs 52, or 1.47% to Rs 3,578 per quintal, with an open interest of 7,390 lots.

Most active near August contract too moved up by Rs 43, or 1.18% to Rs 3,673 per quintal, in an open interest of 2,29,780 lots.

Chana down 0.8% on subdued demand**Chana for July contract traded lower by 0.56%**

Chana prices weakened by 0.85% to Rs 3,048 per quintal in futures market today as speculators reduced positions on the back of sluggish demand in the spot market against sufficient supplies.

Good monsoon rains in growing regions also influenced chana prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, chana for delivery in August weakened by Rs 26, or 0.85% to Rs 3,048 per quintal in open interest of 2,10,040 lots.

Similarly, chana for July contract traded lower by Rs 17, or 0.56%, to Rs 2,992 per quintal in 9,150 lots.

Market analysts said speculators reduced their positions on the back of sluggish

demand in the spot market against sufficient supplies from producing regions, which mainly led to decline in chana prices at futures trading.

Hopes of higher sowing this season on good monsoon rains in growing regions also influenced chana prices at futures trade, they said.

Crude palm oil marginally up by 0.1% on spot demand

The oil for delivery in July contract edged up by 0.04%

Crude palm oil prices traded marginally higher by 0.16% to Rs 513.70 per 10 kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions after a rise in demand in the spot market.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil prices for delivery in August month rose by 80 paise, or 0.16%, to Rs 513.70 per 10 kg in business turnover of 253 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in July contract edged up by 20 paise, or 0.04%, to Rs 513.30 per 10 kg in 232 lots.

Market analysts said fresh positions created by speculators due to rise in demand in the spot market mainly helped crude palm oil prices to trade marginally higher in futures trade