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Monsoon session may be deferred to test waters on food security legislation

Centre hopes to test impact on ground, bring sceptical Opposition around in converting ordinance into law

The monsoon session of Parliament is likely to be convened after August 15, rather than in the third week of July, government sources have indicated. The reason for the delay is that it will allow the Congress-ruled States to implement food security measures for at least a month before the session starts.

The Congress hopes, thus, to be able to test the food security scheme's impact on the ground, convince sceptical Opposition parties of its usefulness and secure their cooperation in converting the ordinance into a law.

For instance, Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit met Union Food Minister K.V. Thomas on Monday to discuss the roll out of benefits under the proposed law. Ms. Dikshit is expected to launch the programme in Delhi, which goes to the polls on August 20 — the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister, the late Rajiv Gandhi.

Karnataka, a State the Congress recently wrested from the Bharatiya Janata Party, will also launch the food security programme on August 20.

As things stand, the UPA's food security ordinance will have to be passed within six weeks of the commencement of the monsoon session or, else, lapse.

Thus far, Opposition parties have been critical of the government, their objections ranging from the difficulties of the bill's implementation to the possibility of its hurting farmers' interests and the fact that it was not universal.

But the Congress, unfazed by the hostility to the food security bill, is pressing ahead, its eyes firmly focused on the State elections at the end of the year — and 2014 — hoping it will be able to change the narrative. It is with this in mind that Congress president Sonia Gandhi has called a meeting of all 14 party Chief Ministers and all PCC chiefs to the Capital on July 13 to give them a prep talk on the food security bill.

Not only are party spokespersons being despatched to various State capitals to hold press conferences on the subject, but representatives from the Group of Ministers on media — including Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, Union Health Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Law Minister Kapil Sibal, Union Foreign Minister Salman Khurshid and Union Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Manish Tewari — too will be making similar trips, starting next week. The ministers will travel in twos and threes. Their mandate, though, government sources said, would not be confined to the food security bill — they will take questions on other subjects as well. In short, the coming weeks will see the launch of a publicity blitz.

Also, with a government to be formed in Jharkhand shortly, the Centre is under no pressure to convene a Parliament session to extend President's Rule which ends on July 18.

However, the speculation that the government will be able to scrap the winter session by delaying the monsoon session seems unfounded. As

government sources pointed out, it would provoke criticism from the opposition of subverting democracy. Technically, of course, it is possible, as there can be as big a gap as six months between two sessions of Parliament.

Of course, the forthcoming monsoon session will probably be the last in which the government can expect to get something concrete done. It will make one more attempt to push through the land acquisition bill.

Vermicompost: a down-to-earth solution to cut input costs



The HinduSIMPLE IDEA: Selecting the right kind of earthworms for making compost is important. Photo: S. Siva

Agriculture based only on chemical fertilizers and other chemical inputs is not desirable because constant use of such inputs causes soil infertility and affects productivity.

“Compared with 10-15 years back, many farmers are now becoming increasingly aware about the harmful effect of chemical use to grow their crops, and are moving towards alternative sustainable solutions.

Healthy soil

“Soils should be alive and home to millions of beneficial bacteria and other micro organisms to make them healthy and for crops to yield well. The soil must be manured in such a way that the activities of beneficial soil

organisms necessary for recycling plant nutrients and producing humus are not inhibited,” says Dr. G.Rajaraman, Senior Research Fellow, Directorate of Natural Resource Management, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore.

The University also provides training to interested farmers in selecting the right kind of worms and also in erecting compost sheds for manure production.

The first step for vermicomposting is selection of right kinds of earthworms. Four varieties of earthworms are available in India and commonly used for composting.

These worms are called ‘manure worms.’ They can be grown on animal dung, poultry droppings, vegetable and other kinds of biodegradable wastes. The worm-casts or excretions of these worms make up the much needed organic manure, according to him. One worm weighs about 0.5-0.6 grams and would consume wastes almost equal to its body weight producing casts of about the same weight in a day. If one million worms exist in an acre, the casts they produce in that area would be about 500 kg a day per acre that is approximately 200 tonnes of manure a year.

Essential nutrients

The worm casts contain all the essential nutrients and good amounts of organic matter and growth regulators which make the soil productive.

“There is no fixed model or standard procedure for manufacturing vermicompost. Any wooden, plastic, card board or cement container of any size can be used for this. All one requires is the interest and drive to make and use it,” says Dr. Rajaraman.

Dried cattle, sheep, horse, pig dungs or poultry droppings vegetable wastes (shredded into small pieces) form ideal food for the worms. Cattle dung mixed with water can be sprinkled if available. Wheat bran, grain bran and vegetable wastes, when added to dung in 1:1 ratio, enhances the quality of the compost production.

The feed must be placed uniformly in a layer on the culture bed and replenished as and when it disappears from the surface.

The composting process would be over in 45- 60 days. We can see the change of the compost material into dark brown coffee powder like colour.

The compost material will be friable when we press it between our fingers. When the compost is ready, watering must be stopped for 2-3 days, and the entire worms move towards the bottom where some moisture would still be available.

Spreading awareness

“Our University has been playing an important role to spread awareness about the importance of using vermicompost for cultivation.

Today we have been effectively able to encourage several hundred farmers in Thondamuthur, Udumalapettai, Nagapattinam, Annur and Palani areas in and around Coimbatore to take up vermicompost manufacture and application. Most of the farmers have 8- 10 acres and grow a variety of crops like bhendi, chillies, tomatoes, plantain and flowers.

Some years back these farmers used only inorganic fertilizers as inputs and spent more than Rs.2,000-3,5000 as input cost for their crops.

“But today they are all manufacturing their own compost and using it and have been able to save a considerable amount on their input cost,” explains Dr. Rajaraman.

Seeing is believing

And adds, “Initially these farmers did not accept the idea that mere application of vermicompost could help them cut input cost and help get a better yield.

We made them interact with a model farmer from Pullavarayankudikadu in Tiruvarur district who moved into sustainable farming from inorganic practices.

The farmer convinced others to take up vermicompost production and application as he is able to get a good yield from his seven acres in which he grows a variety of crops.”

For more information contact Dr. Rajaraman, at email: hortraja@gmail.com, Mobiles 09486086460 and 09487678489.

Vegetable prices hit the roof in Warangal



Out of reach: Tomato and onions which are most sought after are priced over Rs. 60 per kg and Rs. 35 per kg respectively at the Balasamudram vegetable market in Hanamkonda.-Photo: M. Murali

Vegetables continue to pinch the pocket of common man despite the onset of monsoon.

Most of the vegetables are priced above Rs. 40-a-kg and even the leafy vegetables are not far behind.

Tomato and onions which are most sought after are priced over Rs. 60 per kg and Rs. 35 per kg respectively.

A vegetable vendor at Balasamudram market, Hemalatha, said though the district witnessed rains, farmers are yet to sow vegetables. "This rain only results in rotting of existing plants. Fresh sowing has to take place. Hence there is severe shortage of vegetables in the market," she explains.

Cauliflower is priced at Rs. 80 to Rs. 100 per kg and cabbage Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 per kg. Ridge gourd and green chillies are available at Rs. 40 per kg.

Another vendor at the market, Vijayamma, says the supply of vegetables was low at the market and the prices may come down after two weeks following fresh yield. "We are incurring losses as the customers are bargaining too much. They do not believe us when we say there are no supplies of vegetables," she says.

Women who frequent the market feel the brunt. They say that if prices continue to soar, they have to sacrifice on other front at home.

"If we spend Rs. 100, we usually get a bag full of vegetables enough for four or five days. Now, I have to spend Rs. 270 for the same amount of vegetables," rued Madhuri, a resident of Ramnagar in Hanamkonda town.

Despite the onset of monsoon, the prices are yet to stabilise owing to poor yield

Veterinary varsity to offer online guidance to farmers



The varsity has re-launched its website with more interactive facilities.

The Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University is taking baby steps to expand its online presence and make information easily and freely available to farmers, students and researches.

The varsity on Wednesday re-launched its website that includes a farmers' corner which will offer guidance on cattle/livestock. It will have a format where farmers can upload photos of their ailing livestock/cattle and experts can suggest treatments online.

The project to revamp the websites of all the 10 affiliated colleges would be taken up in phases and would be completed in six months, varsity Vice-Chancellor Renuka Prasad said.

The website has a special section that will facilitate discussion among the university faculty. "Farmers can refer to the website for information on diseases, treatments, vaccines etc of cattle or livestock," Dr. Prasad said.

"There is a need to publicise our research and findings on an accessible platform. Also the varsity has signed memorandums of understandings with foreign universities," Nadeem Fairoze, professor and head of the department of live stock products technology, said.

Though the website is in English, it would soon be available in Kannada too, he said. “We are of the belief that the research conducted in the university should reach farmers and not just remain as the academic expertise of a person. The government will help the university to reach out to the farmers,” Aravind Jannu, Principal Secretary, Animal Husbandry, said. The university hopes that once students and faculty register on the new portal, conducting exams online, and keeping track of attendance, etc, would be easier. “Our portal will follow the e-governance model. All updates related to the university will reach students and on their mobile phones as well,” Dr. Prasad said.

www.kvafsu.co.in. has been created by Smak, a technology/branding solutions company

Eviction of farmers opposed

Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene has opposed the eviction of farmers in forests who are dependant on encroached land for their livelihood. The sene condemned the atrocities of forest officials on farmers in Davangere, Karwar, Koppal, Bellary and other districts. Sene general secretary Huchchavvanahalli Manjunath said although there was a Supreme Court verdict that State governments should follow the guidelines of Forest Rights Act 2006 while evicting encroachers of forests land, forest officials were ignoring them and harassing the farmers in the name of eviction.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should intervene in this issue and rescue the farmers from the clutches of forest officials.

Water release till November 10

The Tungabhadra Irrigation Consultative Committee (ICC), which met at Munirabad in Koppal district on Tuesday with P.T. Parmeshwar Naik, Minister of State for Labour and Bellary district in-charge of Bellary district, decided to release water into the reservoir's right and left bank canals from Wednesday.

The decision to release water early was taken to enable farmers in the reservoir's command area to prepare for their kharif crops. Water will be released from July 10 to November 10.

Around 3,200 cusecs of water would be released into the left bank canal, which serves Koppal and Raichur, and 600 cusecs into the high-level canal and an average of 1,000 cusecs for the low-level canal catering to the needs of Hospet, Bellary and Siruguppa taluks in Bellary.

Water would also be released into the ancient Vijayanagar canals (Raya and Basava) at a rate of 130 cusecs up to December 30.

Tungabhadra ICC wants to enable farmers to prepare for kharif crop

Horticulture farmers' sanghas get good response



Members of a Horticulture farmers' sangha inspecting a farm in Honnali with officers of the Horticultural Department.

The formation of the 'Horticulture farmers' sanghas', an initiative taken by the Horticulture Department under the Comprehensive Horticulture Development Scheme (CHDS) in the district, has received a good response.

The department has formed 12 clusters in the district, each cluster comprising two to three villages. Ten months ago, sanghas were set up in each cluster.

The department has formed three clusters each for banana (Davangere, Chennagiri and Harapanahalli) and papaya (two in Jagalur, one in Harapanahalli) and two clusters each for vegetables (Davangere, Honnali), black pepper (Harihar, Chennagiri) and cocoa (Harihar, Honnali). Farmers attached to these sanghas were able to transport their produce to markets otherwise beyond their reach, such as Mumbai. Transportation in such cases is not a problem as they can send their produce collectively.

Umesh Shankar Mirji, Deputy Director of Horticulture, told *The Hindu* that the department would deposit Rs. 2 lakh with each sangha under CHDS. With this as venture capital, the farmers attached to the sanghas could take up other connected activities, he added. Accordingly, Rs. 6.5 crore was released to Davangere under the CHDS.

New activities

The department also aims to popularise activities such as mulching, integrated nutrient management and integrated pest management through the sanghas.

Udumalpet to become vegetable production hub

The agrarian community in Udumalpet block has every reason to cheer as the Department of Horticulture is set to roll out initiatives to convert the block into a 'vegetable production hub' to supply produces to the urban consumers in Coimbatore city.

Under the project, the cultivation of tomato, onion, brinjal and beetroot will be promoted by giving inputs like seeds of high-yielding varieties, planting materials, bio-pesticides, shade nets and poly-houses at subsidised rates to the needy farmers.

"By doing so, it has been envisaged to increase the total acreage under tomato, onion, brinjal and beetroot in Udumalpet block from the present 800ha to 1,600ha," B. Elangovan, Assistant Director of Horticulture, told *The Hindu*.

To attain the production targets, the scheme is going to be implemented through a cluster-based approach.

"We are aiming to constitute 30 clusters in the block, with each group having 19 farmers, so that execution of the scheme becomes easier," Dr. Elangovan said.

Even a small farmer with minimum land holding of 0.1ha will be involved in the scheme.

Collection centres

The horticulture department has identified places to set up two collection centres for storing the harvested vegetables before being transported to Coimbatore through designated-supply chain networks.

“The centres, each having space of around 1,000 sq metres, will be located on poramboke lands at Kannamanaickanoor and Andiyagoundanoor hamlets,” the horticulture officials said.

Since the vegetable farmers in the locality have been facing difficulties to transport the produces to collection centres without losing its freshness, they would be given subsidy assistance to offset 40 per cent of the cost of buying ‘refer vans’.

“The ‘refer vans’ are the vehicles that can carry vegetables in refrigerated state and assistance will given for such vehicles with a capacity of taking 12 tonnes of vegetables at a time,” Dr. Elangovan said.

Aim is to constitute 30 clusters in the block

B. Elangovan

Assistant Director, Horticulture

‘1.5 lakh farm ponds to come up in State’

A total of 1.5 lakh farm ponds will be created in the State — one lakh ponds in delta areas and the rest in non-delta areas — in order to recharge groundwater table and improve irrigation sources near agricultural farms, according to M.Rajendran, Director of Agriculture.

Talking to press persons while inspecting a farm pond developed at a private farm at Kalikkampatti in Athoor union on Wednesday, he said three ponds would be established in each village.

The role of Agriculture Department officials was just to identify the willing farmers and their lands for developing ponds. The rest of the work would be done by farm labourers who had registered their names under Mahatma

Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme. Each pond would be developed at an estimated cost of Rs.34,000, he noted.

Kalikkampatti tank was developed by 225 MGNREGS workers. Wages to the tune of Rs.33,250 were disbursed to them, he added.

The scheme was very flexible. The actual depth of the pond would be 1.5 metres.

If MGNREGS workers were unable to dig the pond manually owing to the hardness of soil, the Agro-Engineering Department would assist the farmers in reaching the prescribed level. Machines would be used to dig the pond further, the Director pointed out.

Farm owner Arul Arasan said he took the initiative at Kalikkampatti to motivate other farmers. "I decided to take the lead. After seeing the benefits of the farm pond, others will automatically come forward dig it," he said.

Joint Director of Agriculture D.Sampath Kumar said 1,068 farmers had been identified in the district so far.

Already, 31 ponds were established. The main purpose was to collect the water in a particular place to recharge wells, he added.

Agriculture Department officials said this model had changed the quality of groundwater at many villages in Andhra Pradesh.

Farmers get to know the benefits of micro irrigation

As both south west and north east monsoons were playing truant in the drought-prone district, the district administration has planned to bring 400 hectares under micro irrigation during this year. Collector K. Nanthakumar, addressing a workshop here on Tuesday to create awareness among the farmers about the benefits of micro irrigation, said the government has

enhanced the subsidy to 100 per cent for small and marginal farmers and 75 per cent to other farmers and exhorted them to take up micro irrigation. He said the while the Centre was giving 50 per cent subsidy, the State government has increased its share to 50 per cent for small and marginal farmers and 35 per cent for other farmers for installing micro irrigation systems.

The government has also introduced a new system of disbursing the subsidy directly to the farmers, giving them an option to choose the appropriate equipment supplier and third party inspection to ensure correct utilisation of funds, he said. Despite the centre and state governments enhancing the subsidy component, the improved irrigation system under the National Mission on Micro Irrigation (NMMI) has not picked up in the district as the farmers were used to the conventional channel irrigation system. Deputy Director (Horticulture) P. Ilangovan said farmers started using the improved irrigation system only during 2007-08 in the district and so far 900 hectares of land were covered under micro irrigation and the farmers were given a total subsidy of Rs 2.84 crore. This year, the district administration proposed to cover 300 hectares under drip irrigation and another 100 hectares under precision farming under the National Agriculture Development Programme, he said. Mr. Ilangovan said as per the existing guidelines, the unit cost for closer spacing per acre worked out to be Rs. 43,816 and the 100 per cent subsidy to small and marginal farmers would be extended to the maximum ceiling of Rs. 43,816 per beneficiary, irrespective of the crops. In the awareness meeting, the farmers were educated on various benefits of micro irrigation, he said adding that sprinkler irrigation helped to sprinkle foliage and wet the

surface area and root zone. In drip irrigation, mainly suited for horticulture crops, water directly fed the root zone. Micro irrigation would help to maintain soil moisture and temperature, while preventing weed growth, he added.

New findings on nutritional values in red banana



The issue of supplying the fruit to schoolchildren has been taken up with the government.— FILE PHOTO: AFP

The Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) has come out with new findings about the nutritional values of the red banana variety grown predominantly in Kamalapur area in Gulbarga district.

Sources in the Horticulture Department told *The Hindu* here on Wednesday that the laboratory results of the CFTRI have revealed that the red banana grown in Kamalapur contained more calcium, iron, potassium and fibre than any other variety of the bananas grown in the State.

The fruit with rich aroma contains high calories (110) and Vitamin C and B6 which are essential for the overall health in human beings.

The sources said that the department has taken up with the government the issue of supply of red banana with midday meals to schoolchildren to improve their nutritional levels. This will help the government effectively fight the high incidence of malnutrition among children in certain parts of the State.

The sources said that the Women and Child Welfare Department should consider supplying red banana to pregnant women and lactating mothers to improve their overall health. Also, the fruit can be supplied to hospitals for women suffering from low haemoglobin level.

Meanwhile, the Horticulture Department has sent samples of red banana to the Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants at Lucknow for laboratory tests to know whether the fruit contains any medicinal value.

The popular belief in the region is that red banana is of medicinal value and no effort had been made to study this aspect.

Although banana is grown in almost all taluks in the district, the red banana variety is grown only in Kamalapur locality. At present, the cultivation of red banana is limited to 50 acres of farmland and the department is striving to increase the area which is reducing every year due to various reasons, including the vagaries of weather.

The department is encouraging farmers to take up the cultivation of red banana by providing them incentives and highly subsidised certified seeds.

The department, which has been successful in getting GI tag for red banana, is now in the process of getting trademark to increase its

marketing value as an incentive for farmers to take up cultivation in more areas.

KJP farmers' wing president appointed

Ishwarchandra Hosamani of Dharwad has been appointed as the State president of the farmers' wing of Karnataka Janata Paksha (KJP) with effect from July 10, State general secretary of the party Rajendra Gokhale has said in a release. — Staff Correspondent
We are losing land and livelihoods to big sugar plantations: Cambodian farmers

Villagers challenge their evictions to make way for the plantations



Bitter deal: Local workers collecting fresh cut sugar canes at Prey Veng province, about 75 km Southeast of Phnom Penh, Cambodia last year.—
PHOTO: AP

The plantation extends as far as the eye can see, row after row of green leaves swaying against the dusky blue light until, finally, it merges with the horizon. There are no houses, no animals, no people. Just sugar.

Thousands of Cambodian farmers claim they are losing their land and livelihoods to big sugar plantations, some of which are directly supplying the European Union (EU) through companies such as Tate & Lyle Sugars.

Nearly 100,000 hectares has been cleared in three provinces to make way for sugar plantations since 2006, activists allege — and most of that land, they argue, has been stolen from subsistence farmers.

Sugar is big business in Cambodia, thanks to a preferential EU trade scheme called Everything But Arms (EBA), which allows Cambodian sugar to be sold duty-free on the European market at a minimum price per tonne. Official figures show that 97 per cent of Cambodia's €10 million sugar exports went to the EU last year, and Tate & Lyle bought 99 per cent of them.

Though the initiative is intended to bolster the world's least-developed countries, the villagers say they have not profited from the deal at all.

Two Cambodian entities owned by the Thai group KSL have, for the past two years, sold all of their sugar cane to Tate & Lyle. Now some 200 villagers are taking their fight to the high court in London.

Backed by British law firm Jones Day, the villagers have filed a lawsuit against Tate & Lyle, claiming that KSL were complicit in government moves to evict them to make way for the plantations. The villagers are claiming compensation for some of the 48,000 tonnes — or roughly €24m worth — of sugar that Tate & Lyle's London refinery has allegedly received — since 2010. Tate & Lyle denies that its supplier, KSL, was involved in land clearances and claims that the land was owned by the government when it was sold to KSL.

Contentious issue

Land rights are a highly contentious issue in Cambodia. Private deeds were abolished under the communist Khmer Rouge, leaving subsistence farmers vulnerable to recent surges in land-grabs and mining and property

developments. Campaigners estimate that nearly three-quarters of the country's arable farmland has been granted to private companies as economic land concessions, resulting in the displacement of more than 400,000 people since 2003.

Under Cambodian law, land possession can be established using various legal documents, not just land deeds. As many of the villagers in Koh Kong claim to have such papers, they say their land was stolen from beneath their feet. Tate & Lyle contends that it engaged a third-party organisation to ensure that KSL complied standards. The auditors concluded land concessions were legitimate.

Tate & Lyle says it is confident that the sugar it has purchased from Cambodia "is free of breaches of human rights". But it also says it is ready to break its contract with KSL if "evidence is forthcoming of any wrongdoing by our supplier".

Since they lost their farmland to the plantations, many villagers say they have been forced to seek work from the very company they are now suing. While visiting one of the KSL plantations in January *The Guardian* saw at least a dozen underage children cutting sugar cane, including some as young as nine years old. Parents confirmed that their children worked in the fields and received payment for their labour. Tate & Lyle Sugars says it does not condone or authorise child labour and would take steps to remedy the situation and would terminate its contract with KSL if the situation could not be resolved. KSL did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The villagers suing Tate & Lyle are only a small number of those affected by the EU's demand for Cambodian sugar. Activists from the Clean Sugar Campaign, a coalition of NGOs and villagers affected by the concessions,

report widespread allegations of human rights abuses, including forced evictions across three provinces — Koh Kong, Kampong Speu and Oddar Meanche . Tracing the sugar is difficult, but official figures show that in 2012 Tate & Lyle imported 15,385 tonnes of Cambodian sugar — 99 per cent of the total Cambodian sugar imported by the EU.

After investigating claims of abuses on the Koh Kong plantations last year, a preliminary report from the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand stated that KSL had breached villagers' "right to life and self-determination" and told *The Guardian* that KSL had caused the "suffering and starvation of villagers [due to relocation to] limited plots of lands".

After villagers took their case to Cambodian courts and the U.N. office of the high commissioner for human rights, the European Parliament adopted a resolution calling on the commission to "investigate the escalation of human rights abuses in Cambodia". In March, parliamentarians urged the EU trade commissioner Karel De Gucht to call for "an immediate and inclusive investigation into these serious human rights abuses related to ... agricultural goods being exported to the EU", with the possible suspension of the EU's preferential treaty with Cambodia.

But Jean-Francois Cautain, the EU's ambassador to Cambodia, said that while allegations are taken seriously, "launching an investigation is not a step to be taken lightly", as the review — and its conclusions — would need to be applicable to all exports, not just sugar.

"Trade preferences in themselves are not the cause of human rights abuses in Cambodia ... and withdrawing preferences could be a 'lose-lose' game for Cambodia, putting a brake on job creation and human development," he said. If the villagers are successful in their claim, this case

could send a strong message to multinational corporations that the business practices of their suppliers have far-reaching repercussions. Most importantly, say campaigners, a victory would strengthen a sector of Cambodian society that has felt voiceless and powerless for far too long. —

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Lessons from a little farmer



A Moment to cherish: Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development Shashi Tharoor presenting an award of the State Agriculture Department to Devipriya Raju of Nehru Memorial Model School, Kadakkal, at a function held at Government Higher Secondary School for Girls, Cotton Hill, on Tuesday. Health Minister V.S. Sivakumar is seen.

She is only 12 years old, but speaks with clarity and wisdom far beyond her age. Devipriya Raju received one of the awards presented by the State Agriculture Department for her efforts in promoting vegetable cultivation. The award function was held at the Government Higher Secondary School for Girls, Cotton Hill, here on Tuesday.

Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development Shashi Tharoor made a mention of her efforts in his address after the prize distribution

ceremony. “I asked her what she grows at home and she said everything except onions. That too, she said, she will begin cultivating this year,” said an impressed Minister.

Speaking to *The Hindu* later, Devipriya was very matter of fact about how her home had virtually turned into a vegetable store. Also, her interest in agriculture has made her decide what she wants to be when she grows up. “I wanted to become a doctor, but when I began to take farming seriously, I realised that I want to be an agricultural scientist,” she said. She, with the support of her family, grows 25 kinds of vegetables, including tomato, cabbage, cauliflower, chilli, lady’s finger and various gourds, on 20 cents of land adjacent to her house at Kadakkal, near Kilimanoor. Lack of availability of onion seeds makes this an exception to the impressive collection. So far she has cultivated around 1,020 kg of vegetables in total. There is also a beehive and hen coop at her house.

A student of the Nehru Memorial Model School at Kadakkal, she boasts of the activities that the Eco Club of the school has been carrying out since the launch of the comprehensive vegetable cultivation development programme by the State government last year.

“When we were given the seed kits last year, everyone took up the task seriously and began cultivation at their homes. When we have favourable conditions for cultivation, it does not make sense to spend so much on buying vegetables brought from outside. Home-grown vegetables are so much healthier as well,” said Devipriya, a testament to the Agriculture Department’s scheme that focuses on mobilising support and promoting awareness on self-sustainability at the school level.

Tuesday's function also marked the inauguration of this financial year's programme.

Devipriya said her parents and brother were as enthusiastic as she was about farming, and helped her in growing vegetables. The persistent bug attacks and lack of water during this year's harsh summer were two problems she faced in cultivation. Most of the vegetables are used at home, and the remaining is given to neighbours and friends.

Devipriya, 12, who has won an award from the Agriculture Department, cultivates 25 varieties of vegetables

Farmers urged to utilise scheme

The Regional Chief Conservator of Forests Dilip kumar has called upon the farmers to make use of the agri-forestry incentive scheme to grow plants on non-forestry lands. He said saplings would be supplied to farmers at subsidised rates to grow plants on their lands. The Forest Department was ready to distribute 10 lakh saplings in the district, he said.

Use subsidy scheme'

Collector Ashish Kumar has appealed to small and marginal farmers to avail themselves of 100 per cent subsidy to raise horticultural crops on their farm lands with drip irrigation. In a statement issued here on Wednesday, he said for big farmers 100 per cent subsidy would be applicable to 12.5 acres under this scheme. Those interested could approach the Block Office of Assistant Director of Horticulture or the office of the Assistant Director of Agriculture.

Withdraw MNAIS to ten selected districts: CPI(M)

Instead, implement NAIS throughout the State, the party tells Naveen

Odisha unit of the CPI (M) urged the Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik to withdraw implementation of Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) for crop insurance in ten selected districts of the State.

The CPI (M) demanded the Chief Minister to intervene and implement National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) through out the State instead. State secretariat member of the CPI (M) Ali Kishor Patnaik through a letter has drawn the attention of the Chief Minister towards this issue and demand of the party regarding it.

At present most of the States, including Odisha are continuing with the NAIS or Rashtriya Krishi Bima Yojana (RKBY), which is operational since 1999 and is managed by Agricultural Insurance Company Ltd, (AIC), a public sector organisation. The CPI (M) leader Mr Patnaik said the AIC Ltd. and banks are well equipped to handle crop insurance in the country.

But the Central government came up with the MNAIS as a pilot project to be taken up in 50 districts of the country.

Odisha State government for some reason accepted the implementation of MNAIS in its ten districts although whether to accept it or not was optional for State government.

Out of the ten districts of Odisha chosen for pilot project of MNAIS, in Cuttack, Nayagarh and seven blocks of Balasore and Bhadrak, the AIC Ltd. continues to be the implementer of crop insurance. In Jajpur, Puri, Ganjam and eight blocks of Balasore and Bhadrak districts, ICICI Lombard GIC Ltd and in Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Khurda districts and four blocks of Balasore district, HDFC Ergo GIC Ltd. are the implementing agencies.

The CPI (M) lamented the fact that these private insurance players were allowed to enter the crop insurance field for the first time without taking consent of the farmers.

According to Mr. Patnaik, after implementation of MNAIS the paddy farmers of Ganjam district would have to pay premium of 6 per cent instead of earlier premium of 2.5 per cent, which would be extra financial burden for them.

The Centre came up with the MNAIS as a pilot project to be taken up in 50 districts of the country. Odisha accepted the implementation of MNAIS in ten districts although it was optional

Ali Kishor Patnaik

CPI (M) leader

Over 1,800 ha to come under drip irrigation

It has been proposed to expand the area under drip irrigation in Cuddalore district to minimise water consumption and maximise crop yield. During this year, 1,811 hectares would be brought under the drip irrigation system, said Collector R. Kirlosh Kumar.

He was speaking at a seminar on 'National micro irrigation scheme' held at the Town Hall here on Wednesday. The Collector said that 80 per cent of storage in water resources was being utilised for irrigation.

Though quite a number of irrigation schemes were being implemented to improve water sources, the entire storage could not be profitably utilised by farmers owing to evaporation and creeping salinity.

Therefore, many techniques were being adopted to economise water usage and augment crop output. Through drip and sprinkler irrigation, the

available water could be put to best use and yield could be substantially increased.

As of now 2,700 ha in Cuddalore district, including sugarcane on 1,725 ha and horticultural crops on 975 ha, had been benefited by the drip irrigation system.

Mr. Kumar also inaugurated a farm-related exhibition on the occasion.

Two fish farmers felicitated

Marking the National Fish Farmers Day, the Central Institute of Fisheries Education (CIFE) on Wednesday felicitated two fish farmers Yella Satti Lingam of Balabhadrapuram and Billakurthi Srinivasa Reddy of Tallareveu here on its premises. Seed of L. Vannemei variety was released into the brackish water fish farm by scientist and activist T. Rajyalakshmi. Kakinada rural MLA K. Kanna Babu, who was chief guest, underscored the need for further research into fish and prawn culture, as the demand for sea foods was increasing steadily in the international market.

Don't use excess urea, farmers cautioned

The Agriculture Department has cautioned farmers against excessive application of urea in their fields. An official press release issued by the Department here advised farmers to apply urea in their fields based on soil tests or as per general recommendation in the integrated handbooks distributed to them. Since the price of urea has come down, there is a tendency among farmers to use urea extensively. Excessive application of urea could make the crops susceptible to pest and disease attacks, and

also affect the yield. Farmers were also asked to purchase urea only after checking the price printed on the urea bags.

Managing serpentine leaf miner

Serpentine leaf miner is an invasive pest that was accidentally introduced in to India from America. It is a highly polyphagous pest infesting pulses, oil seeds, vegetables, green manures, ornamentals, fodder and fibre crops.

The adult insects are small in size and pale yellow in colour. The female fly thrusts its eggs on the lower surface of the leaves just below the epidermis which hatch in 2-3 days.

Mining pattern

Emerging maggots mine into the leaf and feed on the tissues making serpentine mines. The pattern of mining is irregular and can greatly reduce the level of photosynthesis of the plant.

Several maggots mine on a single leaf and the infestation is usually seen on immature leaves. Due to severe infestation drying and dropping of leaves occur. Wounding of the foliage by maggots also make an avenue for the entry of bacterial and fungal pathogens.

The maggot becomes full grown in 7-18 days and full grown maggots are long, orange-yellow in colour. The maggots come out of the mine and pupate in the soil for 5-10 days. Indiscriminate use of insecticides are highly detrimental to naturally occurring biological control agents and also leads to development of resistance to the pest.

Some control measures

Collect and destroy the infested leaves Crop residues may serve as sources of inoculums, so destruction of weeds and deep ploughing are recommended.

Parasitoids like *Chrysonotomyia* often provide effective suppression of this pest in the fields. Hence use of disruptive insecticides is not advisable.

Placement of yellow coloured sticky trap at 100 numbers per acre will attract and kill adult flies.

Spray botanicals like neem oil emulsion, neem seed kernel extract. Insecticides like Dimethoate 30 EC (0.05 per cent) or Chloropyriphos 20EC (0.05 per cent) or Fipronil 0.3G (75gm/hectare) are recommended.

(M.T. Ranjith, Phd scholar and Dr. Mani Chellappan, Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Entomology, College of Horticulture, Vellanikkara, Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur, email: ranjith.mt16@gmail.com, mobile: 09400681441 and 09447463522.)

Experts highlight scope of cassava as biofuel crop

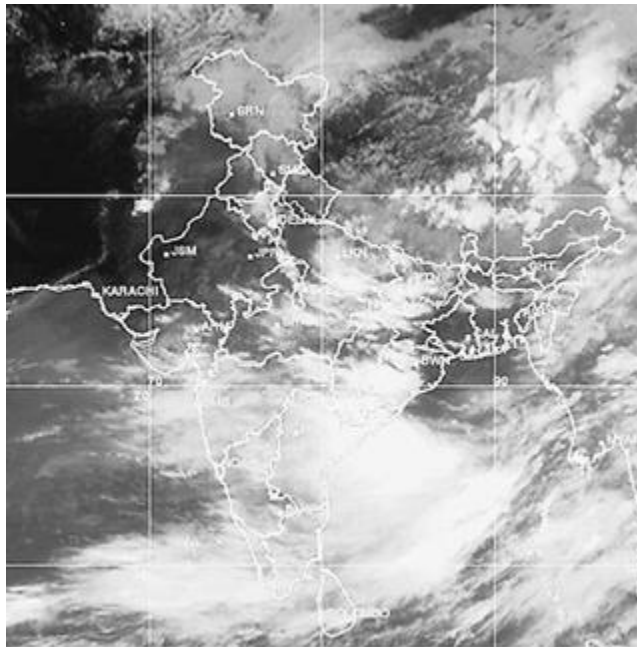
Experts participating in the International Conference on Tropical Roots and Tubers organised by the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) and the Indian Society for Root Crops (ISRC) have highlighted the increasing potential of cassava as feedstock for the production of bioethanol as fuel.

In a paper presented at the meet, S.P. Ghosh, former Deputy Director-General, Indian Council for Agricultural Research, said the cultivation of cassava could be extended to more areas in India to make it a competitive biofuel crop.

With its high energy content, low maintenance and ability to grow under a wide range of climatic conditions, cassava had emerged as a potential candidate for production of bioethanol. The technology for cassava alcohol, patented by the CTCRI in the 1980s, required refinement for commercial scale production.

Mr.Ghosh said bioethanol based on the lignocellulosic residue of cassava and sweet potato could be combined with starch-based options to make biofuel production cost effective. He said the high productivity of cassava crop in India would make production of bioethanol cost- competitive. The move to bring comparatively less fertile land in the semi-arid tracts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and high rainfall areas in the north-eastern region under cassava cultivation would ensure supply of raw material for ethanol production

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on July 10th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	35	24	27	206
New Delhi (Sfd)	35	23	70	194
Chandigarh	33	26	1	331
Hissar	37	25	2	166
Bhantar	32	17	0	207
Shimla	25	17	0	415
Jammu	31	22	13	247
Srinagar	26	17	3	85
Amritsar	30	22	24	205
Patiala	33	25	18	268
Jaipur	32	26	0	201
Udaipur	32	26	0	173
Allahabad	34	27	2	447
Lucknow	33	23	6	346
Varanasi	35	26	41	297
Dehradun	30	25	0	1315
Agartala	33	26	tr	405
Ahmedabad	33	25	3	279
Bangalore	29	20	11	201
Bhubaneswar	36	25	0	321
Bhopal	30	24	5	559
Chennai	33	26	0	192
Guwahati	32	25	8	392

Hyderabad	30	22	tr	207
Kolkata	36	28	0	405
Mumbai	31	25	22	1095
Nagpur	33	25	19	554
Patna	34	26	0	151
Pune	29	22	2	314
Thiruvananthapuram	29	23	10	588
Imphal	31	23	4	183
Shillong	23	19	4	407

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 Jammu and Kashmir. The axis of Monsoon trough at MSL passes through Ferozpur, Delhi, Fursatganj and thence southeast-wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over Jammu and Kashmir, at many places over Haryana and east Uttar Pradesh, at a few places over Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, east Rajasthan, west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (3 cm and above)

HARYANA: New Delhi Safdarjung and Lodi Road 7 each, Delhi Ridge 4 and Julana, Guhla and New Delhi Palam 3 each, **JAMMU AND KASHMIR:** Katra 11 and Rajouri 4, **PUNJAB:** Talwandi Sabo 5, **EAST RAJASTHAN:** Govindgarh, Arthuna, Gangrar and Arnod 9 each, Malakhera, Bhungra and Shergarh 7 each, Sajjangarh and Laxmangarh 5 each, Banswara, Kesarpura and Salopat 4 each and Danpur, Garhi and Bagidora 3 each,

EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Bansgaon 11, Rajghat 10, Akberpur 8, Gorakhpur and Gaighat 7 each, Ayodhya and Gonda 6 each, Ramnagar, Mirzapur and Bahraich 5 each, Haraiya, Tarabganj, Varanasi, Manakpur and Kakardharighat 4 each and Hata, Bhinga, Neemsar, Basti, Barabanki and Kisanganj 3 each, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Aligarh 4 and Nakur and Mauranipur 3 each and UTTARAKHAND: Haldwani 5, Kosani 4 and Chamoli, Nanital and Pithoragarh 3 each. **FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 12th July 2013:** Rain/thundershowers would occur at many places over Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Jammu and Kashmir during next 24 hours and decrease thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at a few places over rest of the region outside west Rajasthan where it will be at one or two places. **HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING:** Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over east Uttar Pradesh during next 24 hours and over southeast Rajasthan on 12th.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 12th July 2013: Generally cloudy sky. Rain/thundershowers may occur in some areas.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

SC to Tatas: Singur land should go back to farmers

The Supreme Court on Wednesday asked Tata Motors to come clean on what it wants to do with its leasehold rights on Singur land, which it held should now go back to farmers since the Nano factory has moved out to Sanand in Gujarat.

"The land was acquired for establishing a car manufacturing plant at Singur. You have already moved out. Now you cannot say that you still have interests in the land in question. The land should go back to farmers. We may ask the West Bengal government to file an affidavit on the issue of giving the money back to you which you had paid at the time of land acquisition. In the interests of justice, we think it will serve the purpose," a bench of justices H L Dattu and Dipak Misra said while hearing the special leave petition by the Mamata Banerjee government challenging the order of the Calcutta high court division bench that had annulled the Singur Land Rehabilitation and Development Act, 2011.

The bench directed Tata Motors and the state government to file affidavits clarifying their stands when it takes up the matter for hearing on August 13.

Include vegetables in 'essential commodities'

Food rights groups say the unprecedented rise of vegetable prices in retail markets in recent weeks underlines what they have been saying all along, that vegetables, particularly those that form the staple Indian diet, should be included in the list of essential commodities.

Essential commodities are items covered by food pricing legislations such as the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 and Prevention of Black Marketing Act, 1980 (see box). The laws empower the government to control production, distribution and pricing of select items and to crack down on unethical trade practices . Economists say vegetables like onion were considered essential commodities till 1999, only to be deleted from the list due to the emphasis on market liberalization.

TOI has reported how vegetables are being sold at prices up to four times their wholesale value, in recent weeks. "This is precisely why the Right to Food campaign has been saying that essential vegetables as well as wheat should be brought under the Essential Commodities Act. Currently, there is no regulatory body for vegetables and fruits and retailers exploit that," says economist Vibhuti Patel. Despite a bumper crop, neither farmers nor consumers benefit, she explains, saying middlemen get away with the profits. Kerala and Punjab have in the past weighed the option of including vegetables as essential items.

Ulka Mahajan of the Anna Adhikar Abhiyan believes vegetables can be brought under the ambit of essential commodities if the state was to pass a government order. "We also need more mechanisms to liaise farmers directly with consumers to break the monopoly of retailers and middlemen," she says.

Agricultural economist Devinder Sharma too criticizes the government's firefighting approach. "There is no supply constraint this time. We have similar spells of rising prices in the past four to five years. Every time this happens, the government steps in with short-term measures but we need

to tame the wholesale and retail trade," he says. "Laws need to be effectively implemented. People feel the market will correct itself, it never will."

Record production of foodgrains likely in Kharif season: Sharad Pawar

India is likely to achieve record production of foodgrains and other crops in Kharif season of 2013-14 because of good monsoon that has led to the doubling of sowing area, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said today.

"All kharif crops put together, acreage has reached 401.69 lakh hectares as on July 5, as against 215.6 lakh hectares in the same period last year. This is a very very good picture. As of today, it looks like we will break all previous production records," Pawar told PTI.

For the Kharif season, all-time high in foodgrains output was in 2011-12 at 131.27 million tonnes. However, the output fell in Kharif last year because of drought in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan.

The likely bumper production of Kharif crops would help the government in implementing food security programme and also in controlling prices.

Pawar noted that the sowing data is not final as planting operation would continue till August first week. Rice, pulses, cotton, maize and soyabean are the major Kharif crops.

"By and large, there is good rain every where and farmers have started sowing. This is a good indication. I will be able to give final data on sowing by the second week of August," Pawar said.

The country has received 21 per cent excess rainfall since the onset of the monsoon this year with 20 sub-divisions registering surplus rains.

"The figures are indicating that sowing operations are in full swing. By and large, rains seem to be good in most parts of the country. If this continues up to August, India will be a major producers in most crops," Pawar observed.

According to the latest data, the area under coverage for oilseeds has increased sharply to 110.27 lakh hectares till July 5, from 26.52 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

The acreage of coarse cereals has gone up to 65.55 lakh hectares from 23.01 lakh hectares. Rice area has increased to 69.17 lakh hectares from 56.77 lakh hectares.

Now, a Vibrant summit for farmers

Gujarat chief minister and BJP's Lok Sabha poll campaign committee chairperson Narendra Modi will reach out to farmers from across the country through the Vibrant Gujarat Global Agri-Business Summit 2013. The summit will be held from September 9 to 11 at Mahatma Mandir in Gandhinagar. Modi will felicitate farmers from across India for innovations in agriculture. Sources claimed that this will project him as a progressive leader focused on the development of the farmers.

The Gujarat government machinery is working hard these days, to bring a minimum of 5,000 farmers from different states, and at least 25,000 farmers from Gujarat's 18,000 villages to the event.

An official said, "We have decided to award 101 progressive farmers who have made significant innovations in their area at the summit. We have requested the Union government to provide a list of innovative farmers whom the state government can reward. The chief minister present these

awards to the farmers himself. We have been given a target of bringing at least eight farmers from each village of Gujarat."

Sources further said that a Kisan Gosthi (farmers' talk show) will be held in which award-winning farmers will share their experiences. So far, more than 200 agriculture-related companies and 20 countries have confirmed participation.

Following the Vibrant Gujarat Global Investor Summit pattern, all state governments have been invited to and a number of states have confirmed their partnership in the event.

Diplomats, agriculture experts, academicians and large numbers of investors are likely to participate as well.

"A three-day exhibition on innovation and new technology in agriculture will also be organized. At the end of the event several memorandums of understanding (MOUs) will be signed," said a source.

Sources also said that the event will focus on production, productivity and value-addition in agriculture.

Sowing almost over in Saurashtra, rains continue

The ongoing spell of rain has led to near completion of sowing of crops in Saurashtra. Agriculture department officials said over 96 per cent of sowing across the region has already been completed.

Sources said out of total 36,15,500 hectares of cultivable land, sowing has already covered in 35,05,200 hectares.

Meanwhile, moderate rainfall continues across the region favorable conditions for crops. The region so far has received 45 per cent of its average annual rainfall.

It was the early arrival of monsoon that triggered widespread sowing in June itself. Groundnut and cotton are the prime crops that have been sown across the region. The total area covered under the groundnut crop is 13,78,300 hectares, while that under cotton is 16,38,900 hectares. The other crops that have been sown include bajra, sesame, guvar, vegetable and fodder.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) officials have issued a warning of heavy rainfall over the next 24 hours.

Exotic fruits adorn the Ramzan platter

With the onset of Ramzan, markets especially in the Old City areas bustled with the festive crowd out to buy from a variety of items meant for the 30 days of fasting and enjoying delicacies at the end of the day. Imported dates are a big attraction among rozedaars.

"There are about 10 varieties of dates available with us. But the imported ones are more popular than the local ones being sweeter than the latter. As rozedaars break their fast with dates, they want the best quality of dates," said Mohd Shafeeq, a shopkeeper selling dates at Aminabad. He added that there has been marginal increase in price of imported dates since last year.

While, Kimia dates from Iran are sold at Rs 200 per kilogram, Ajwa Al Madina variety is priced at Rs 1,500 for 500 grams. Another variety of dates from Iran, Maiyami, is available for Rs 80 for 500 grams. The date gaining most popularity is King Tomur from Tunisia. "The speciality of this date is that it is packed with branches of the tree and one has to pluck the dates from it," said Manoj, another shopkeeper.

The dates from Dubai, under the brand name of Fard, cost Rs 240 per kg, whereas Taiba dates of Saudi Arabia are Rs 80 for 500 gram. For those who cannot afford the expensive ones, Indian dates are available at Rs 110 per kg.

Similarly, a wide variety of imported fruits from the US, China, New Zealand and Thailand are in demand. "Eating fruits and juices immediately after opening the fast provides energy to the body. During Ramzan, we avoid oily food and fruits are the best option, so we are purchasing the imported ones for quality's sake," said Zeenat Khan, a housewife.

Out of all imported fruits, apples from Washington are the most sought after. These cost Rs 170 per kg. The Chinese apples, Fuji, are next in demand being sold at Rs 160 per kg. Priced at Rs 170 per kg, apples from New Zealand too are in demand. "There is hardly any buyer for apples from Himachal Pradesh which are available for Rs 150 per Kg as they are still not ripe," said Manoj, a fruit-seller.

Queues increase, prices fall on Day 2 of subsidy

Extensive media coverage and word-of-mouth publicity drew longer queues to the 11 fair price shops across the city on Wednesday, and compelled many retailers to further slash prices. Almost 11 tonnes of supplies ran out by 7pm at the Andheri Apna Bazar. Disappointed shoppers complained the queues would move faster if the vegetables were prepackaged. "If there were 1kg packs, sales staff would merely have to count packages and compute the total," said Manisha Shinde, a resident of Four Bungalows in Andheri.

The Mulund Apna Bazar had five new vegetables—including chavli, methi and gavar—on the list, taking it to 20. On Tuesday, the store sold 900kg of vegetables worth Rs 21,400 within two-and-a-half hours. On Wednesday, a record 1,000kg of vegetables was sold out in hours. Uday Gandhi, assistant manager at the store, said people were returning early from work to queue up. "On Tuesday, the counters shut at around 6.30-7 pm and many returned empty-handed, but they decided to come early today," he said.

However, while the scheme checked the artificial hike in just two days at Andheri, forcing vendors to cut rates by half, outside the Mulund store, it was business as usual. "Let them sell for less. When the counters are empty, people will have to flock to the regular market and pay the normal price," said Shiv Prasad Singh, a vegetable hawker. At Dhake Colony, Andheri, an argument ensued between a vegetable vendor and a wholesaler who claimed to be from APMC market. "Retailers are raking in 300% profits on vegetable sales these days. The retail cartel meets regularly and members message each other to fix food prices across various localities," the wholesaler alleged.

The scheme also found some opposition. At the Andheri Apna Bazar, Harcharan Singh Sethi, in his mid-50s, was busy discouraging shoppers, convincing them there were not enough supplies and directing them to vendors outside. When TOI confronted him, Sethi denied he was an agent of retailers and claimed to be close to Congressman Charanjit Singh Sapra. However, Sapra told TOI he was "not too familiar" with Sethi.

APMC deputy secretary Avinash Patil said he received enquiries from 50-100 cooperatives, housing societies and NGOs, who wanted to host similar schemes in their areas. "We are helping them fill application forms," he said.

Patil said that the entire western suburbs are currently served only by the Andheri outlet. "There is a huge demand in that part of the city. We will surely augment centres at the earliest."

Market director Sanjay Pansare said wholesalers are willing to supply fresh vegetables on an ongoing basis to clusters of housing societies at wholesale rates. "We have started a helpline, 022-2788-1400, to take bookings. Societies or organisations can allocate space and phone in orders a day in advance. We would like the consignment to be above 500 kg so that transportation costs and overheads are viable," he said.



India to seek greater agri market access in US

India is expected to press for greater market access for its agri products, particularly mangoes, pomegranates and litchis, and raise the visa issue during a meeting with a top US official here tomorrow.

These issues are likely to come up during the bilateral meeting of commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma with US trade representative Mike Froman. Sharma is on a four-day visit to the country. "India hopes that issues that currently constrain effective market access of Indian agricultural goods including mangoes, pomegranates and litchis can

be resolved soon," an official said. While India has been seeking market access for exports of litchis to the country, the matter is stuck with the US Environmental Protection Agency that is raising issues of Maximum Residue Limit of sulphur-di-oxide. Although the US has allowed import of Indian mangoes in April, 2007, the proposal is not working well due to pre-condition of irradiation imposed by the US.

India has been insisting that the responsibility of the pre-clearance inspection in this regard should be shifted to National Plant Protection Organisation.

On the visa issue, Sharma may make a case for doing away with protectionism specially with regard to free movement of professionals in addition to goods.

"India has been expressing its concern on protectionist measures, including visa related impediments that has affected the mobility of our professionals particularly in IT sector to the US," the official said.

Weather - Chennai

Today's Weather



Rainy

Thursday, Jul 11

Max Min

33° | 24°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:48

Humidity: 89

Sunset: 06:39

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Jul 12

Max Min

34° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Jul 13

Jul 14

Jul 15

Jul 16

Jul 17



35° | 27°

Cloudy



35° | 27°

Overcast



34° | 26°

Overcast



35° | 27°

Overcast



35° | 27°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Rain: 70.1 Sunrise: 05:30

Humidity: 89 Sunset: 07:22

Wind: normal Barometer: 999

THE HINDU Business Line

Coconut Board plans integrated farming to boost productivity



The Coconut Development Board will be implementing an integrated farming programme in coconut holdings for productivity improvement. The Laying out of Demonstration Plots (LODP) project will be started in the four southern States through select Coconut Producers' Societies (CPS) only.

The Board has earmarked Rs 4.38 crore for implementing a fresh LODP programme in the four States during 2013-14. In Kerala, 40 best CPSs have been selected from around 2,300 registered with the Board for the programme in 1,000 hectare. Rs 175 lakh is earmarked for the same.

The selection of best CPSs is being carried out in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Board It has allocated Rs 87.5 lakh for the implementation of the programme in 500 hectares in Tamil Nadu, Rs 1.23 crore for 700 hectares in Karnataka and Rs 52.50 lakh for 300 hectares in Andhra Pradesh. The scheme is being implemented by the Board on a cluster basis in a contiguous area of appropriate size of 25-50 ha.

The integrated farming programme aims at increasing the production and productivity of coconut from unit holdings by proper and timely adoption of

scientific practices in a farmer-participatory mode. The Coconut Board is providing agricultural inputs for the scientific management of unit holdings. The programme is aimed to facilitate the adoption of appropriate coconut-based farming systems in a cost-effective manner and thereby improve the production and productivity to generate better incomes for farmers. Critical inputs such as fertilisers, green manures and plant protection chemicals are being provided besides planting materials for intercrops.

Buyers from east pick 2 rakes of Maharashtra sugar



Sugar prices ruled unchanged for the third consecutive day on less than expected demand due to rain in city and poor retail offtake. On the spot, M-grade lost Rs 10 a quintal. Naka rates were steady. Mill tender prices declined by Rs 5-10 tracking continuous drop in futures.

Sources said that the market lost its direction on buyers' resistance as futures failed to regain strength. Trading was routine. However, retail demand for Ramzan improved slightly but high supply and ample inventory in the market are keeping prices on check.

The price is likely to remain range-bound. After long gap, producers sold two rakes (27,000 bags each) of S-grade to eastern side buyers. Local

stockist purchases were limited. Arrivals in Vashi market were 61-62 truckloads (of 100 bags each) and local offtake was flat.

On Tuesday, about 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold about 78,000-80,000 bags including 54,000 bags to upcountry buyers and 23,000-25,000 bags to local traders at Rs 2,935-3,000 (Rs 2,940-3,000) for S-grade and Rs 3,030-3,110 (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 3,066-3,145) and M-grade Rs 3,182-3,311 (Rs 3,192-3,311). **Naka delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,010-3,080 (Rs 3,010-3,080) and M-grade Rs 3,120-3,230 (Rs 3,120-3,230).

Confusion over plans to impose import duty on pulses



Notwithstanding sluggish demand and buying support in pulses, a majority of pulse seeds in Indore mandis ruled higher as confusion reigned over the Government's plans to impose import duty on pulses. Tur (Maharashtra) perked up to Rs 4,400-50 a quintal (up Rs 50), while tur (Madhya Pradesh) rose to Rs 4,100-4,200.

Given lower domestic output this year, dependency on imported tur and rise in dollar, bullish trend will likely to continue in the coming days. Added to this, any hike in import duty on pulse seeds will further lend strength to bullish sentiment in tur and other pulse seeds, said Prakash Vora, a local wholesale pulse trader.

Tur dal (full) was at Rs 6,200-6,300, tur dal (sawa no.) at Rs 5,800-5,900, while tur marka ruled at Rs 6,800 a quintal. Bullish trend was also witnessed in masoor, urad and chana. Masoor (bold) rose to Rs 4,400-50 (Rs 4,325-75), while masoor (medium) ruled at Rs 4,100-4,200. Masoor dal (average) rose to Rs 5,000-25 , masoor dal (medium) at Rs 5,125-50 , while masoor dal (bold) rose to Rs 5,225-50 a quintal.

Urad (bold) rose to Rs 3,400-50 (Rs 3,375-3,400), while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 3,000-3,100. Urad dal (average) ruled at Rs 4,000-4,100, urad dal (bold) at Rs 4,500-4,600, while urad mongar ruled at Rs 5,500-5,800 a quintal. Moong (bold) was at Rs 4,900-5,100. Chana also gained Rs 50-100 with chana (kanta) rising to Rs 3,150-3,200. Rise in spot chana also lifted its dal with chana dal (average) being quoted at Rs 3,550-75, chana dal (medium) at Rs 3,775-3,800 a quintal.

Slack buying pounds pepper



Pepper prices slipped on limited activities coupled with slack demand and consequently, the first two active contracts ended lower. Upcountry buyers were slow on the anticipation that nearly 2,500 tonnes of pepper would be released soon from the warehouses and that, in turn, would bring prices down. On the other hand, heavy rains throughout the State coupled with a *hartal* today resulted in no activities in the primary and terminal markets

in the State. On the National Multi Commodity Exchange, July and August prices decreased by Rs 158, Rs 49 respectively to Rs 40,501 and Rs 40,840 a quintal. September contracts increased by Rs 180 to Rs 40,430. Total turnover moved up by five tonnes to 48 tonnes, while the total open interest dropped by eight tonnes to 111 tonnes. Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 38,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 40,500 (MG 1) a quintal in the absence of any activity. Indian parity in the international market was at \$6,900 (c&f) Europe and \$7,150 a tonne (c&f) for the US and remained out priced as all other origins were ruling much below the Malabar prices, they said.

Lack of N. India orders grinds turmeric



Spot turmeric declined on Wednesday due to lack of North Indian orders and sluggish buying. Prices were down Rs 200 a quintal. “Though farmers are now willing to sell their turmeric even for lower price, buying is negligible as traders have not received any fresh upcountry orders and are supplying the meagre quantity purchased by them to the local shops and masala firms,” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. He said that the arrival have increased to 5,500 bags. Farmers expected good sale, but were disappointed as only 45 per cent stocks was

sold. Exporters and traders are waiting for upcountry orders. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,311-6,609 a quintal; the root variety Rs 4,063-5,911. **Salem Hybrid Crop:** The finger variety fetched Rs 5,793-7,611; the root variety Rs 5,411-6,311 a quintal. Of the 966 bags that arrived, only 267 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,433-6,677; the root variety Rs 5,290-6,037 a quintal. Of the 746 bags on offer, 610 found takers. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,189-6,489; the root variety Rs 4,889-5,729. Of the of 876 bags put for sale, 855 were sold. At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety quoted Rs 5,488-6,569 and the root variety Rs 4,747-5,942. Of the 188 bags up for sale, 135 were traded.

Poultry feed may turn dearer



Poultry feed prices may turn dearer later this month after remaining unchanged this week with ingredients ruling range-bound, said trade experts. Subhash Sharma, Financial Head, Sarvottam Poultry Feed Supply Centre Pvt. Ltd, told *Business Line* that soyameal, a key ingredient, has been ruling in tight range and keeping feed prices unchanged. Other

ingredients, meanwhile, have also been range-bound, without affecting the cost of production.

However, due to rising dollar, a few medicines such as DLM and Lysine have become dearer and it may push feed prices upwards later this month, said market experts. In the physical market, soyameal moved up by Rs 730 to Rs 35,230 a tonne. Bajra dropped by Rs 70 to Rs 1,360 a quintal, DCP was at 35 a kg, MBM remained unchanged and sold at 35,500 while maize dropped by Rs 30 to Rs 1,490 a quintal. Mustard de-oiled cake went up by Rs 200 to Rs 15,400 a tonne, DRB improved by Rs 200 to Rs 11,300 a tonne, while rice bran oil ruled at 53 a kg.

FEED PRODUCTS

Broiler concentrate feed quoted at Rs 2,050 for a 50-kg bag while Broiler Starter Mash was at Rs 1,550. Pre-lay mash sold at Rs 1,040 while layer grower mash quoted at Rs 980. Layer concentrate 25 per cent was sold at Rs 1,490 while layer concentrate 35 per cent went for Rs 1,175.

POULTRY PRODUCTS

Meanwhile, poultry products market witnessed a steady trend, on Wednesday. Egg dropped by Rs 8 paise and sold at Rs 2.88. Broiler ruled flat and quoted at Rs 72 a kg, while chick went for Rs 11, remained unchanged.

Panel identifies 9 commodities for trading on regional bourses

The Expert Committee on the Revival and Activation of Commodity Specific Regional Exchanges, constituted by the Union Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, has identified nine commodities as having a production value of Rs 10,000 crore and below. It has hence recommended that they

be treated as small commodities, and that their trading be restricted to commodity-specific regional exchanges.

Kishor Shamji, a member of the committee, told *Business Line* that the identified commodities include black pepper, coconut oil, cardamom, castorseed, urad, guar seed, guar gum and tur.

EXPERT COMMITTEE

The expert committee, which met in Mumbai on Saturday, expressed the view that the regional exchanges “must be given one year lead period to upgrade themselves”.

They would need to adopt demutualisation, electronic online trading and professional management.

The minimum capital base for the exchange, he said, was Rs 2.5 crore.

An anchor investor or a group of investors would be needed to support them, the committee said.

PEPPER TRADING

The trading quality of pepper is MG-1, the standard grade. With 50,000-55,000 tonnes of projected crop and a 2012 carry-forward stock of another 10,000 tonnes, the total availability would come to 60,000-65,000 tonnes.

“However, only 30,000-35,000 tonnes would be categorised as MG-1.

This brings the scope of trading pepper on the national exchange further down,” the committee pointed out.

As the prices prevailing at the national exchange platform are always high or low, investors would be encouraged to trade in regional exchanges.

Therefore, it is high time the regulator corrected the disparity, the committee said. Currently, National Multi-Commodity Exchange (NMCE)

has restarted pepper trading. But it is mostly following the same rules as the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, despite problems.

Shamji said the expert committee is expected to submit its report soon to the Ministry and the Regulator recommending various ways for healthy commodity futures trading on regional exchanges.

The recommendations would be aimed at protecting the interest of small commodities, producers, growers and consumers as well as exports of these commodities without being hampered or distorted by unwanted price fluctuations/volatility by the big commodity operating cartels, he said.

Mixed trend in edible oils



Edible oils were mixed for the second consecutive day. Spot prices for palmolein, cotton oil and rapeseed oil increased by Rs 2-3 for 10 kg, while groundnut, soyabean and sunflower oil were unchanged on slack demand. Due to rain, the volume was subdued, said sources.

A broker said that bearish futures cooled the physical market. During the day, about 650-700 tonnes of palmolein and soyabean (refined) oil were traded. Liberty sold 300-350 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 542-545 and resellers offloaded 150-200 tonnes at Rs 538-540. Ruchi sold 100-150 tonnes of soyabean refined oil at Rs 670.

Soyabean arrivals were about 1.15-1.20 lakh bags and its prices were Rs 3,550-3,650 ex-mandi and Rs 3,750-3,850 for plant delivery. Mustard seeds arrivals were one lakh bags and the prices were Rs 3,090-3,625.

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 550, soyabean refined oil Rs 670 and sunflower refined oil Rs 821. Allana was quoting palmolein at Rs 549-552 and super palmolein Rs 585. Gokuls' rates were Rs 545-548 for palmolein. In Rajkot, groundnut oil was up by Rs 20-25 to Rs 1,500 for *teli* and Rs 975 (Rs 950) for loose (10 kg).

Malaysian BMD crude palm oil's August contracts closed lower by 23 to MYR 2,382 (MYR 2,405), September by 20 to MYR 2,377 (MYR 2,397) and October to MYR 2,367 (MYR 2,384) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: groundnut oil 970 (970), soya refined oil 670 (670), sunflower exp. ref. 755 (760), sunflower ref. 820 (820), rapeseed ref. oil 695 (692), rapeseed expeller ref. 665 (662) cottonseed ref. oil 657 (655) and palmolein 540 (538).

Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 592 for 10 kg for July delivery.

Festivals may light up demand for chana



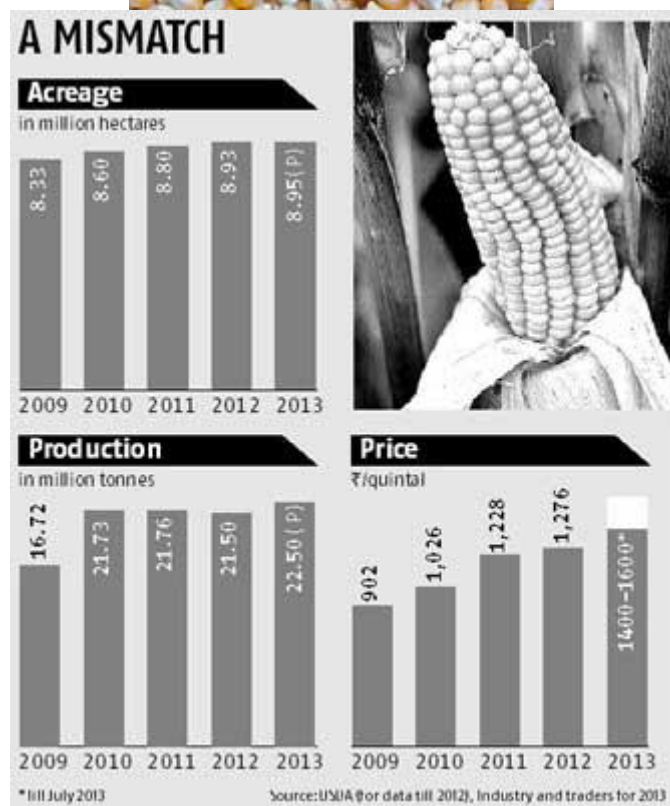
Notwithstanding sluggish demand in pulses and besan, chana inched up to Rs 3,100 a quintal (Rs 3,050-75) on rise in futures. Besides huge crop production, bumper yield in dollar chana this year has also been keeping chana prices under leash, said a trader adding that with increased use of dollar chana and other lower varieties such as kaktu and Kabuli Bitki by the millers for manufacturing 'besan', demand for chana from the millers in the past sometime has declined sharply this year.

Traders, however, expect some gain in chana prices in the coming days as demand for chana from the millers will likely to increase during the festive season next month. Chana dal (average) was at Rs 3,600-25 a quintal, chana dal (medium) at Rs 3,725-50, chana dal (bold) ruled at Rs 3,900-50. Dollar chana ruled flat at Rs 3,500-4,500 a quintal on steady demand. In container, however, improved export demand perked up dollar chana prices by Rs 100 a quintal in the past one week.

On Tuesday, dollar chana (42/44 count) was quoted at Rs 5,400-25 , 44/46 count at Rs 5,175-5,200, 46/48 count at Rs 4,975-5,000, while 58/60 count ruled at Rs 3,425-50 and dollar chana (60/62 count) ruled at Rs 3,300-25 a quintal respectively.

Business Standard

Maize prices up despite higher sowing



Maize prices are reigning high in the open market due to lower availability of the crop. The damage to the rabi crop due to early monsoon and deterioration in the quality of maize because of open storage have created a supply crunch. Sowing during this kharif season, however, is expected to go up by three-five per cent.

The maize price registered an unprecedented increase of Rs 200 a quintal in the last one month. Depending upon the moisture content, maize prices are between Rs 1,600 and Rs 1,650 a quintal. While weakening of the rupee might have helped starch exporters, those using maize as a primary input are unable to cash in on this opportunity as there is a dearth of raw material.

The industry is operating at 70 per cent capacity due to supply bottlenecks. The starch export market is lucrative these days but the paucity of maize has hindered companies from gains in currency fluctuation, Vishal Majithia, president of the Starch Manufacturers' Association, told Business Standard.

The sowing this year is higher by three to five per cent in different parts of India for kharif maize, says Raju Choksi, vice-president, agri commodities, at Anil Nutrients Ltd. Choksi attributes the higher acreage to better monsoon. The dry spell last year refrained the farmers in some areas from growing maize, he added.

The results of the kharif crop would be visible in October when the arrivals start. If the rain God remains kind, the crop size would be higher than last year. But there's time to go and nobody can predict the climate, Choksi said.

Maize is used in manufacturing 200 products and despite a thrust by the

government to grow maize, farmers have not shown keen interest in the past few years.

A grant of Rs 200 crore has been sanctioned to set up a Directorate of Maize Research at Laddowal, near Ludhiana, Punjab. The institute, with 45 scientists, would be relocated from the existing campus in New Delhi and run by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research. Despite huge demand from the industry, farmers have shown tepid interest in diversifying to maize.

Paviterpal Singh Pangli, a farmer from Punjab, said the assured price of maize was a must to mobilise farmers to grow the crop. The Union agriculture ministry raised the minimum support price of maize to Rs 1,310 per quintal this year from last year's 1,175 per quintal.

So, the demand for the industry has to be channelised. Maize has a tremendous scope in the food processing industry and value addition to maize may generate good exports potential.

Sugar import to stop after custom duty hike: Pawar

The minister also expressed confidence that there would not be any shortfall in production in the 2013-14 marketing year starting October

Hike in sugar import duty to 15% will halt shipments and boost domestic sales helping millers to clear Rs 9,000 crore outstanding payments to cane farmers, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar today said.

The minister also expressed confidence that there would not be any shortfall in production in the 2013-14 marketing year starting October. Rather, the country will have surplus sugar for exports, he said. "Import of sugar will stop now. It (duty hike in sugar import) is a good thing because so much sugar is lying in godowns of millers and there are no takers. In such a situation, at least we can protect our farmers," Pawar told PTI when asked about duty hike to 15% from 10%.

The government yesterday hiked import duty on sugar to 15% from 10% to help the industry clear Rs 9,000 crore cane arrears to farmers. The move will, however, make the sweetener costlier for the common man. The outstanding payments to cane growers is around Rs 9,000 crore, especially in Uttar Pradesh, he added.

Asked if there is scope for further hike in sugar import duty, he said: "Not necessary. It is not viable to import at 15%." The country has imported nearly 6,00,000 tonnes of raw sugar and another 1,00,000 tonnes of refined sugar so far in 2013-14 marketing year (October-September), according to industry. The imports have been putting pressure on domestic prices, making it difficult for millers to clear cane arrears.

On industry's projection of 5% fall in sugar production in 2013-14, Pawar said: "There should not be any shortfall and we will be in a position to export. There is sufficient carry over stock. The domestic demand is only 21-22 million tonnes."

Indian Sugar Mills association (ISMA) has pegged the production in 2013-14 at 23.7 million tonnes as against 25 million tonnes in the current marketing year.

On likely fall in cane output in Maharashtra, he said, "I don't think so. Maharashtra has started growing early cane varieties and sowing will improve in the coming weeks."

Jeera prices rise by 0.5%

Analysts attributed the rise in jeera futures to increased buying by speculators on pick up in overseas demand



Jeera prices rose by Rs 77.50 to Rs 13620 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators enlarged their positions, driven by a rise in overseas demand. At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera for delivery in July rose by Rs 77.50, or 0.57%, to Rs 13,620 per quintal, with an open interest of 963 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in August contract traded higher by Rs 30, or 0.22%, to Rs 13,842.50 per quintal in 17,283 lots. Analysts attributed the rise in jeera futures to increased buying by speculators on pick up in overseas demand.

Chana up 1.1% on rising spot demand

Chana for August contract edged up by 0.13%



Chana prices gained 1.18% to Rs 3097 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators enlarged their positions, driven by rising demand in the spot market.

At the National Commodity Derivatives Exchange, chana for delivery in July gained Rs 36, or 1.18% to Rs 3097 per quintal with an open interest of 3320 lots.

In a similar fashion, chana for August contract edged up by Rs 4, or 0.13%, to Rs 3,145 per quintal in 2,14,090 lots. Analysts said speculators enlarged their positions, driven by rising demand in the spot market mainly led to rise in chana prices at futures trade.

Cardamom down 2.1% on profit-booking

Cardamom for delivery in August traded lower by 0.27%



Cardamom prices fell by 2.16% to Rs 670 per kg in futures trade today as speculators booked profits driven by sluggish demand in the spot market. Adequate stocks availability in the physical market on increased arrivals from the producing belts also put pressure on the cardamom prices. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in July fell by Rs 14.80, or 2.16%, to Rs 670 per kg in business turnover of 88 lots. Similarly, cardamom for delivery in August traded lower by Rs 2, or 0.27%, to Rs 752.20 per kg in 394 lots. Market analysts said sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position on increased arrivals from producing regions mainly kept pressure on the cardamom prices at futures trade.

Crude palm oil up 0.7% as demand picks up

Crude palm oil for delivery in August moved up by 0.66%



Crude palm oil prices rose by Rs 3.60 to Rs 516.60 per 10 kg in futures market today as speculators created fresh positions, supported by pick up in demand in the spot market. At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil for delivery in July rose by Rs 3.60, or 0.7% to Rs 516.60 per 10 kg in business turnover of 514 lots. Likewise, the oil for delivery in August moved up by Rs 3.40, or 0.66% to Rs 517.50 per 10 kg in 520 lots. Analysts said the rise in crude palm oil prices at futures trade was mostly

attributed to fresh positions created by speculators following pick up in demand in the spot market.

After sowing, farmers in Dharwad keep their fingers crossed

The officials stated that there was a demand for 63,400 metric tonnes of fertilisers in Dharwad district for kharif season



Farmers in Dharwad district, who had to bear the brunt of drought last year and the year before, are now fearing another dry kharif season. The district received good rains in the beginning of this kharif season prompting the farmers to take up sowing operation. Nearly 71 per cent of the cultivable area has been sown. However absence of rain in the first week of July in certain parts of the district has been a cause of worry for the farmers.

An official from agriculture department, said the situation would be grim if this position continues for another week. "The farmers will be in deep trouble. The crops are getting infected by insects and pests and the fear of major crop loss looms large," he told Business Standard. The district should have received normal rain of 289 mm till July 7 but has received 235 mm, according to official sources. The department of agriculture had targeted 2,08,900 hectares to be brought under sowing but 1,47,927 hectares has been sown. The farms in entire Navalgund taluk and Shiraguppi, Aminabhavi and Garag hoblis remain unsown. The district has

registered 71 per cent sowing till last week of June. The officials of agriculture department were expecting rains and the area under sowing to be increased in first week of July. Giving statistics of sown area, the officials stated that in Dharwad taluk already soya is sown in 8990 hectares, paddy in 8700 hectare, maize in 5,900 hectare, groundnut in 5830 hectare.

The officials stated that there was a demand for 63,400 metric tonne of fertilisers in the district for kharif season. The fertiliser is being supplied to the farmers through Raith Sampark Kendra and co-operative societies. The department has prepared a programme to distribute seeds at subsidised rates to all the farmers in five taluks.

Meanwhile, confusion prevailed over the procedure to be followed to get the benefit of crop insurance under National Crop Insurance scheme and Weather-based crop insurance scheme. Praveen Kumar nodal officer and coordinator from National Crop Insurance Corporation informed that the farmers should have knowledge of list of crops and areas notified for insurance benefit. July 31 is the last date for paying the premium. The farmer going for insurance should compulsorily have bank account and should submit a certificate from revenue authority regarding crop he is cultivating.