

25 July, 2013

Accept expert panel report on GM crops: forum



This June 6, 2013 photo shows the Crop Circle created by Greenpeace in New delhi to protest GM crops and the government decision to introduce the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bil

The report is a strong indictment of regulatory affairs, says Coalition for a GM-free India.

Welcoming the recommendations of the Technical Expert Committee (TEC) on Genetically Modified crops, the Coalition for a GM-free India has urged the government to accept the report and “not come in the way of delivery of justice.”

The panel, set up by the Supreme Court in a Public Interest Litigation, has recommended in its final report that it would not be advisable to conduct any field trials in Bt transgenic crops till gaps in regulatory system are addressed.

“The report is a strong indictment of the state of regulatory affairs with regard to modern biotechnology in the country. We urge that the Central

government to take the report seriously and act on it in the interests of food safety, security, and sovereignty as well as protection of environment and farm livelihoods,” the Coalition said in a letter to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

However, the Association of Biotech Led Enterprise - Agriculture Group (ABLE AG) that represents the industry has termed the document — though an improvement over the interim report that called for a 10-year moratorium on field trials of Bt transgenic in all food crops (those used directly for human consumption) — as “regressive, biased and a troubled treatise” that promises to push Indian agriculture into an archaic age.

“The industry believes the TEC report, besides being incomplete, is also anti-science and anti-research and will severely dent the future of country's farmers besides destroying the domestic private and public sector research. While improving the testing programmes is a continuous process, we do not believe that testing should be stopped in the interim,” said Ram Kaundinya, Chairman, ABLE AG in a press statement.

The report submitted to the Supreme Court has not been signed by R.S. Paroda, the representative of Agriculture Ministry who was inducted after the submission of the interim report last year.

“This is not surprising given the fact that Dr. Paroda’s very inclusion in the Committee was controversial and objectionable — his organisation receives funding from biotech majors like Monsanto and Mahyco — and this constitutes a clear conflict of interest. It is ironical that even this court-appointed committee has had to face such a conflict of interest situation, given that this has been the case with almost all GM-related issues in India so far,” the Coalition’s letter said.

The TEC's comments with regard to bio-safety dossiers that were approved by the current biotechnology regulator is a scathing indictment of the failings of the existing regulatory regime, the Coalition noted.

The TEC could not find any compelling reason for India to be the first country, where Bt transgenics are widely consumed in large amounts for any major food crop that is directly used for human consumption.

The TEC has therefore reiterated its recommendation made in the Interim Report that there should be a moratorium on field trials for Bt in food crops, until there is more definitive information from sufficient number of studies as to the long-term safety of Bt in food crops.

With regard to herbicide tolerant (HT) GM crops, the panel said that these would most likely exert a seriously adverse impact over time on sustainable agriculture, rural livelihoods and the environment. Noting that that HT GM crops are completely unsuitable in the Indian context, the TEC recommended that field trials and release of HT crops not be allowed in India.

Unlike the situation in 1960s, the TEC said, there is no desperate shortage of food and India is in a reasonably food secure position. It recommended that the release of GM crops for which India is a centre of origin or diversity as in Bt brinjal should not be allowed. (Philippines Supreme Court has recently banned open field trials of Bt Brinjal.)

Urging the government to accept the recommendations based on sound-science, justice and principle of sustainability", the Coalition said "vested interests must not be allowed to prevail."

Classroom and on-field training helps maintain soil health



Package of practices: The National Agro foundation lent support to watermelon cultivation.-Photo: Special Arrangement

Maintaining soil health is an important aspect of agriculture that many farmers simply tend to overlook.

In fact, poor growth, declining yield, pest and disease infestations are all chain reactions that can be associated with poor soil fertility. Periodical soil testing for any nutrient deficiency and seeking right advice from experts become essential for good crop growth.

Mr. R. Paramasivam, from Mambattu village in Kancheepuram district, cultivates paddy, groundnut and watermelon (through drip fertigation). In spite of good care and a lot of investment the farmer could not get a reasonable return.

Lot of problems

Poor vine growth, unproductive flowering and infestations plagued his watermelon crop for which he received little advice from local traders.

The distressed farmer was trying to seek a solution for this problem when he happened to know about the National Agro Foundation experts visiting his village periodically to advise and guide farmers.

He approached the experts during their subsequent visit when, through NABARD Farmers Technology Transfer Fund (FTTF), the foundation established a frontline demonstration using its “Resource conserving lean farming technologies” on watermelon crop in the village last year.

As a first step, the soil was tested and found to be deficient in micronutrients. A package of practices was advised based on the soil analysis report. The incidence of diseases was attributed partially to deficiency of nutrients also.

Though Mr. Paramasivam hails from a family of farmers he lacked the knowledge for maintaining soil fertility. He was aware neither of the bio control measures and combining the organic, bio and chemical sources of nutrients nor of pest control materials.

Ignorant

“Generally farmers do not appreciate the importance of maintaining soil health and fertility (which is long term), as they do not see an immediate change in the crop performance in fields.

“Correcting the deficiency and nullifying the effect of excess is the key for a sound soil health management programme. Secondly, each nutrient plays an important role in the entire life cycle of a crop which cannot be substituted.

“Farmers, out of ignorance, use certain type of fertilizers over and above the requirement — especially nitrogen and phosphorus — and neglect the deficiencies of other parameters, especially secondary nutrients like

calcium, magnesium and sulphur, and micro nutrients like iron, manganese, copper, zinc, boron etc.,” says Mr. M.R. Ramasubramaniyan, Director.

Judicious mix

The foundation offered both classroom and on-field training for the farmer to improve the soil fertility status, modified the fertigation schedule apart from providing nutrients like calcium, magnesium, zinc and boron externally by soil application. It advised a judicious mix of organic, bio and pest control measures and Panchagavya spray to boost female flower formation.

“We find panchgavya to be a very good growth promoter in crops and are encouraging its use among our farmers,” says Mr. Ramasubramaniyan.

In a matter of 2-3 months the results appeared to be quite good. The yield of watermelon increased to 14 tonnes from 10 tonnes per acre with an investment of Rs.10,088. The farmer sold the fruits at the local market for Rs.4,700 per ton.

Income details

He got a gross income of Rs.65,800. The net profit was Rs.56,000 per acre as against a previous net income of Rs.37,000 per acre resulting in an additional profit of Rs.18,000 per acre. This increase in income in about 6-7 months has been the bait for many other farmers in Arasur and Vanniyanallur region who also want to follow Mr. Paramasivam’s method of cultivation.

According to Mr. Ramasubrayamaniyan in many regions of the state the soil has saturated levels of phosphorus but still farmers apply two bags of DAP (diammonium phosphate) before growing any crop.

Balanced application

“They think that this is a must without bothering to know its implications. Instead of DAP application of low cost biofertilizers like Phosphobacteria also help. Unless the levels of these nutrients are balanced, farmers would be increasing the cost of inputs and production without commensurate returns,” he says.

For more details contact Mr. M.R.Ramasubramanian, Director, National Agro Foundation, mobile: 944864884, website: www.nationalagro.org.in, email: nationalagro@gmail.com and the farmer Mr. R. Paramasivam at Vinayagar koil street, Mambattu village, Andarkuppam Po, Cheyyur taluk, Kanchipuram district, Mobile:9585481637

CM orders water release for irrigation

Water will be released from Friday from the Papanasam, Servalar and Manimuthar dams for irrigating farmlands in Tuticorin district that depend on the Thambirabarani river, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa announced on Wednesday.

In a statement, she said the water release was ordered following representations from farmers. The move would benefit 7,524 acres in Srivaikundam and Sathankulam taluks. — Special Correspondent

Casuarina plantations protect banana crop from monsoon fury

Loss for banana growers in western part is around Rs. 5 crore annually



A banana plantation covered by casuarina plantation in a private farm land at Narasimha Naicken Palayam in Coimbatore district.— Photo courtesy: IFGTB

Monsoon always brings cheer to farmers, but when accompanied by gusty winds, it poses a grave threat to banana plantations with plants ready for harvest being often uprooted. Now, there is a ray of hope for banana growers, as a pilot project implemented by the Coimbatore-based Institute of Forest Genetics and Tree Breeding (IFGTB) has proved to be a relief.

By planting casuarina, a natural wind-breaker, the institute has successfully saved banana plants in Coimbatore.

Giving details to *The Hindu* about the 'Windbreak Agro-forestry System', institute director N. Krishnakumar said there was heavy crop damage in Coimbatore and adjoining areas during monsoon. Banana being the third most important commercial crop in the State, loss for banana growers in the western part of the State is estimated to be around Rs. 5 crore annually. In Coimbatore and its surroundings alone, banana is cultivated on 30,000 hectares with an annual production of 11 lakh tonnes.

In order to help farmers, the institute, on a trial basis, took up planting of casuarina in four different banana plantations owned by private people, on

a total of four hectares of land spread in Narasimha Naicken Palayam, Bodi Thimman Palayam, Idigarai and Royarpalayam, Mr. Krishnakumar said.

Sharing his experience, N. Velusamy, a farmer from Bodi Thimman Palayam in Coimbatore district said he had raised banana crops on five occasions. But, the yield was affected due to monsoon winds.

“The institute raised the bio-shield in my banana plantation in January 2012 and by November, I harvested one crop. This time the yield was more than the previous occasions,” he said.

Mr. Krishnakumar said his organisation had chosen casuarina, which is normally grown in the inlands, for the windbreak system. Casuarina trees increased revenue to farmers and could be harvested in three years for sale to pulp wood industry. Even in the second year, fully-grown casuarina plantation could be harvested as there is a great demand for this wood in gasifier units of the energy production companies. Thus, bio-shield provided dual income to farmers, he added.

Concern over control of foreign seed companies on farmers

“Farmers are not opting for seeds anymore. The tray seedling system is now being thrust on them by foreign companies that offer to take care of the crop from sowing to harvest,” Vice-Chancellor of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K. Ramasamy said here on Monday.

Speaking at the second annual seed workshop at TNAU, he voiced concern about the total control the foreign seed companies exercised – from sowing to harvesting - on the Indian farmer.

Mr. Ramasamy said that the issue today was not about seed availability or productivity, but the control that Indians were allowing the multinational companies to wield, by forsaking technology for money.

Focus

He urged plant breeders and seed producers to focus on these lines, and asked university researchers to strengthen their research focus.

“Experts fail to focus on seed priming. This is very important as it ensures 100 per cent germination. If you fail to do seed priming, foreign agencies will take over,” he said.

M. Ramasami, Managing Director, Rasi Seeds, talking about the scope for improving seed quality, stressed the need for focus on limited varieties.

“Though the area under rice in Tamil Nadu has stagnated over the last decade at 20 lakh hectares, the production increased from 52 lakh tones to 62 lakh tonnes in the last six years. There has been no significant improvement in the area under hybrid rice. It is sad that the State has been importing seeds from other parts of the country. The quality and genetic purity of these seeds is becoming a question,” he said.

Urging university officials to produce breeder seeds, Mr. Ramasami said big players were promoting mechanical transplanting of rice.

“Seed requirement will fall drastically when mechanical planting takes over. Hence, there will be no requirement to increase seed production on a large scale,” he added.

Nearly 75 participants, including policy makers, scientists, extension workers, and farmers, attended the workshop.

‘Big players promoting mechanical transplanting of rice’

Giving millets the rightful place on dining table

Distribution of millets through PDS in the offing, says TNAU Vice-Chancellor



They do not have the polished look of rice or the trendy packaging of wheat. Millets, though rich in nutritive value, have been the less favoured grain. *Ragi, thinai, varagu, kambu, cholam, samai*, and *kudiraivaali* have always carried the tag of “poor man’s food”.

With the Green Revolution, and governments promoting rice and wheat through the public distribution system only resulted in increasing the dependence on these cereals to the exclusion of millets, according to agricultural experts.

But no longer so. Various factors have made not only the State Government, but also the common man realise the nutritional effectiveness to ignore the tag and make millets an integral part of the food intake in Tamil Nadu.

These factors include nutritional deficiencies and malnourishment in children that are seen as a result of too much dependence on rice and wheat and not consuming a variety of cereals.

On the part of the State Government, a Centre of Excellence for Millets has been announced to come up at Thiruvanamalai at a total cost of Rs. 20 crore, to promote millets on a mission mode.

According to Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K. Ramasamy, who is also a State Planning Commission member, the centre will function under the aegis of the university on a 38-acre land of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Department. It will be set up with seed money of Rs. 1 crore

“Awareness is increasing among the common man about the significance of consuming multi-grain food products.

Role

The government is keen to promote millets in a big way, especially in the urban areas. The role of the university in the functioning of the centre will be to popularise millets by ensuring supply of quality seeds, identifying machinery for processing the raw millets, and assisting farmers and women of self-help groups develop value-added millet products,” he said.

Retired staff of TNAU would be redeployed to work at the centre. The focus would be on promoting millets in an attractive manner. Women of self-help groups would be provided handy modified processing equipment that they could use at home to clean and break millets, prepare and process flour. Chef Damodaran would be roped in to teach them value-added products that could be packaged to be sold off- the-shelf.

Distribution of millets through the public distribution system was also in the offing.

An associate professor of nutrition and dietetics pointed out that there was a definite interest for millets among the urban population.

But it was too early to see it as a substitute for rice and wheat.

To begin with, she suggested that it could be integrated with rice, for example, while making batter for idli or dosa, the quantity of rice could be divided into two portions to include one-half of rice and the other half of millets.

Children would be interested in confectionery products, while elders could consume it in the form of gruel, dosai, idli, etc.

TNAU says 'nendran' banana price will get better

The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has said that the price of 'nendran' banana in Coimbatore market will be priced between Rs. 31 and Rs. 33 a kg in August.

Price is expected to increase to somewhere between Rs. 34 and Rs. 37 a kg in September and reach the maximum price during Onam festival in the same month. Thereafter it is expected to decline to reach between Rs. 33 and Rs. 35 a kg in October.

This forecast has been made by DEMIC on analysing the price of 'nendran' banana that prevailed in Coimbatore Farmers' Shandy for the past 10 years.

'Nendran' is planted in April-May and October-November. January to February is the peak season for arrival of 'Nendran' banana and July-August faces lean arrivals. This banana is one of the important varieties cultivated in Tamil Nadu. It is mainly grown in Coimbatore, Erode, Tiruchi, and Kanyakumari.

Tamil Nadu produces about 82.53 lakh tonnes from an area of 1.25 lakh hectares, and has the highest production share with 26.47 per cent.

Farmers oppose concrete flooring of canals

Displeasure over the planned move to lay concrete flooring in the canals under Lower Bhavani Project area and effluents getting mixed in Nanjarayan irrigation tank at Koolipalayam, were some of the major grievances aired at the grievances redressal meeting organised by the district administration on Wednesday.

The requisition to expedite the implementation of Avinashi-Athikadavu Flood Water Canal Scheme also figured in the discussion.

C. Nallasami, president of Lower Bhavani Farmers Welfare Association, said concrete lining of the canals in the LBP planned by Public Works Department, if implemented, would be against the excellent concept of rainwater harvesting now being promoted by the State Government.

“Once the concrete flooring is laid, groundwater recharging in the command area will get stopped,” he pointed out.

On the Avinashi-Athikadavu scheme, G.K. Nagaraj, a farmer and general secretary of Kongunadu Munnetra Kazhagam, later told the reporters that the scheme was essential to recharge the borewells and wells in places like Mettupalayam, Avinashi, Tirupur and Perundurai, and other areas spread over nine Assembly constituencies.

“It is sad that the project, actually conceptualised in 1956, has not been implemented till now,” he said.

In the farmers’ grievances redressal meeting held on the day, some of the points discussed as part of the agenda were not connected to farming

activities like the need for a roundabout in a junction at Koolipalayam and mosquito menace taking a few farmers by surprise.

Collector G. Govindaraj, Joint Director of Agriculture M.K. Sherif and senior officials of various departments were present.

Honeybees to help Idukki cardamom farmers

SC/ST families to get honeybee colonies under KAU project to promote beekeeping as livelihood support



Golden tips: Scientists from the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, handle a training session on beekeeping for farmers.

Cardamom farmers in Idukki may soon turn to a tiny winged ally to improve the yield from their plantations. The planters stand to benefit from a project to be launched by the Kerala Agricultural University in the hill district to promote beekeeping as livelihood support.

Proposed under the Idukki package, the project is expected to enhance the yield in 41,593 hectares of cardamom plantations through improved pollination by honeybees, Vice-Chancellor P.Rajendran told *The Hindu*.

S.Devanesan, principal scientist attached to the All India Coordinated Research Project on Honeybees at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, said the pilot project would be implemented at Vandanmedu. "As many as

30 SC/ST families will be provided with honeybee colonies and equipment for beekeeping as well as scientific inputs for enhancing cardamom yield. The colonies will be multiplied and sold to other beneficiaries of the project in Idukki for sustainable beekeeping.”

A study by the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) in Udumbanchola taluk in Idukki earlier this year had revealed that indiscriminate application of pesticides had converted the cardamom plantations into a ‘no insect land,’ affecting pollination and bringing down the yield.

It estimates that organic farming and apiculture could result in a 30 to 50 per cent increase in cardamom yield through better pollination.

The KSBB is gearing up to promote apiculture in an organically cultivated cardamom estate. It estimates that the spicy honey from cardamom will fetch a good market for farmers.

The KAU is working on another project

to disseminate advanced technologies in commercial meliponiculture using stingless bees to provide an alternative livelihood for the tribes of Palakkad.

“There is ample scope to take up meliponiculture for empowerment of women across the State. Such units can be recommended for old-age homes, orphanages and schools,” says Dr.Rajendran.

For households

The university is preparing to take up a project named Oro Veettilum Oru Cherutheneecha Koodu, under which each household will be provided with a colony of stingless honeybees.

“Kerala has about 600,000 Indian bee colonies. There is potential to rear an additional 49 lakh colonies in rubber plantations, a rich source of nectar for the bees. The State’s forest cover spanning an

area of 10,81,509 ha can also provide pollen and nectar,” Dr.Rajendran said.

The university has drawn up plans to supply disease-free healthy Indian bee colonies by utilising the mass multiplication technology standardised at the Vellayani centre.

“A beekeeper starting with 10 colonies can generate an income of Rs.1,20,000 through the sale of colonies or Rs.2,00,000 through the sale of honey” explains Dr. Devanesan. The Vellayani centre has developed a honey-based fat-free energy drink with a shelf life of 30 days and is preparing to transfer the technology for mass production.

Coconut sale

Coconut procured by the Kerala Kera Karshaka Sahakarana Federation (Kerafed) from farmers in the district will be sold to the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED). A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting chaired by District Collector C.A. Latha here on Wednesday. Altogether 3,437 tonnes of coconut will be sold to the NAFED as per the agreement. — Staff Reporter

Uzhavar Mandrams to popularise farm techniques

Pudumai Uzhavar Mandrams should take modern farming techniques to farmers to help them double productivity and increase income by threefold as aimed by the Tamil Nadu government, said S.Natarajan, Tiruvarur District Collector, at Koradachery in Tiruvarur district on Monday .

He inaugurated the mandram of Maangudi village at Koradachery panchayat union. He said that government is giving 100 per cent subsidy for drip irrigation and has introduced special kuruvai package for taking up

kuruvai cultivation in pumpset-irrigated areas. Farmers are encouraged to take up sericulture, cultivation of alternate crops, and goat rearing. The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technique will help farmers cultivate using less water, he said. He distributed agricultural inputs under kuruvai special package to 10 farmers. Senthil, chairman, Koradachery town anchayat, and Ganesan, Joint Director of Agriculture, participated.

Prospect of opening Mettur dam for samba cultivation brightens



The water release from mettur dam wil benefit 4.7 lakh hectares in delta region. Photo: E. Lakshmi Narayanan

Water level in the reservoir is just eight feet away from reaching 90 feet

The prospect of opening the Mettur Dam for samba cultivation brightens as the water level is just eight feet away from reaching 90 feet. The current level on Wednesday is 82.39 feet.

Though the inflow continues to recede from 27,363 cusecs on Tuesday to 19,075 cusecs on Wednesday, PWD officials are hopeful that the level would increase gradually once water is released from Krishna Raja Sagar dam in Karnataka.

“The reservoirs in the neighbouring State are nearing full capacity and the excess water will be discharged immediately. We are closely monitoring the situation,” senior engineers told *The Hindu*.

T. Baintamil Selvan, Chief Engineer, Tiruchi Region, Water Resources Department, along with engineers, recently inspected the dam, including the 16-channel sluice gate, which discharges surplus water in the dam.

During the same day last year, the level stood at 75.15 feet as the dam was opened for samba cultivation on September 17, 2012. If the current inflow level is maintained for another week, the dam could reach the mandatory 90 feet. The water release would benefit 4.7 lakh hectares in the Delta region.

It is customary to release water for irrigation on June 12 every year, but Karnataka’s refusal to release water in time and poor rain in catchment areas aided by poor monsoon delayed the opening of the dam. On Wednesday, the storage was 43.08 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) as against its full storage of 93.47 tmcft. Currently 3,800 cusecs of water is released for drinking water purpose.

Thrips menace in chilli and its management

Chilli or red pepper is a well known commercial condiment crop grown all over India. Thrips infestation is a persistent problem for chillies. Severe infestation leads to 30-50 per cent yield loss.

The thrips also attack other crops like tea, acacia, prosopis, castor, cotton, mango, onion, groundnut, chekkurmanis, pomegranate, pulses, brinjal, grapevine, citrus species and numerous weeds.

Infestation

Tiny crawling nymphs and adults lacerate leaf tissues and consume the oozing sap. Leaves are curled, crumbled, twisted, deformed and ultimately shed down. Buds become brittle and also drop down.

Severely infested leaves and buds develop bronze colour in appearance. Flower production and pod set are adversely arrested. Thrips also transmit leaf curl disease.

Adult thrips prefer to infest tender leaves and growing parts of shoots. An average of 100 eggs are laid by an adult at rate of two to four per day and the eggs are actually inserted into the leaf tissues. They hatch in five days. Nymphal and pupal period together last for another couple of weeks. Total life cycle is completed in 15-22 days. As many as 25 overlapping generations are observed in a year. Thrips reproduce sexually and by parthenogenetic viviparity. Summer season favours rapid multiplication of the pest.

Control measures

Avoid growing chilli after sorghum as sorghum is vulnerable to the pest. Do not follow chilli and onion mixed crops as both are susceptible to the infestation.

Inter crop with sesbania grandiflora to provide shade which regulates thrips population

Sprinkling of water over the seedlings checks the population to a greater extent.

Treat chilli seeds with imidacloprid 70 WS at rate of 12g/kg of seed. Soil application of carbofuron 3 G at 33kg/ha or phorate 10 G at 10kg /ha is preferable.

Spray any one of the following insecticides once in three weeks: imidacloprid 17.8 SL 3.0 ml/10 lit, phosalone 35 EC 2 ml/lit, dimethoate 30 EC 1 ml/lit.

(Dr. J. Jayaraj, Professor and Dr. N. Muthukrishnan, Professor and Head, Department of Entomology, Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai 625 104, Phone 0452 – 2422956 Extn:214, email: agentomac@tnau.ac.in)

Talk of second Green Revolution, a move to corporatise agriculture: AIKS chief

The 33rd national conference of the All India Kisan Sabha that opened here on Wednesday came down heavily on the anti-peasant policies of the Centre and decried the talk of second Green Revolution that would only pave the way for corporatisation of agriculture.

Leading the attack from the front, national president of the Sabha S.Ramachandran Pillai said that the agrarian policies of the Manmohan Singh government completely ignored the interests of vast majority of the peasantry and agriculture.

“They are playing only into the hands of the landlords and corporates. Now the Centre is talking about second green revolution whose aim is nothing but corporatisation of agriculture. The latest ruse is public-private partnership in which all the policies would be tailored to the needs of the corporates,” Mr Pillai said.

He said that the experience of the Green Revolution was that it had helped only the richer sections and increased the divide between the rich and the

poor and led to agrarian crisis. The neo-liberal economic policies pursued by the government after 1990s aggravated the agrarian crisis.

Post-liberalisation, the seed market was opened up to multinational companies and as a result the cost of seeds had gone up. Lashing out at the Centre's nod for foreign direct investment in retail trade, Mr Pillai said that it would not only endanger food security, but would also affect the sovereignty and independence of the country.

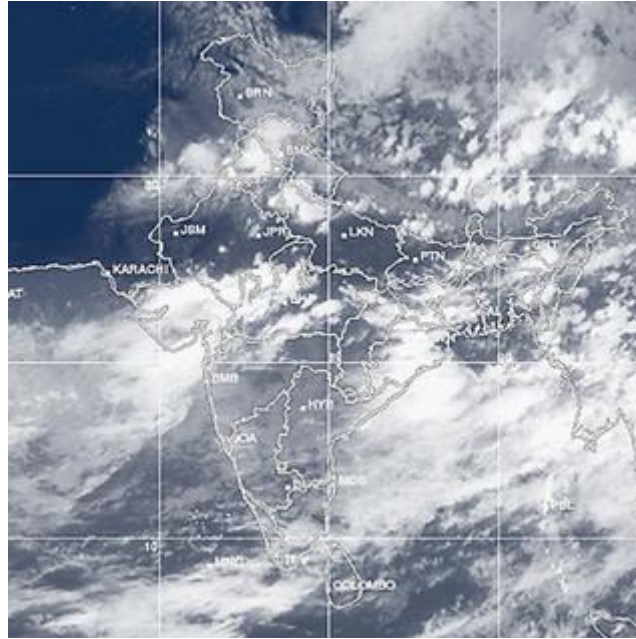
Elaborating the point, he said that once a foothold is given the MNCs would decide the crops the peasantry should grow. The passage of legislations such as the Seed Bill and the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority Bill were meant to facilitate the process of takeover of many sectors by corporates.

Former Sabha president N.Sankaraiah said that neither the Congress nor the BJP could frame farm policies to improve the lot of peasantry and the working class. In this regard, only a democratic alternative, as was practiced in West Bengal, Tirupura and Kerala, could be of any help to mitigate their sufferings.

Tamil Nadu unit president K.Balakrishnan, MLA, recalled the heroic struggles launched by the peasantry in the State.

Conference comes down heavily on the anti-peasant policies of the Centre

weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on July 24th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	35	28	0	314
New Delhi (Sfd)	35	28	1	387
Chandigarh	35	28	0	437
Hissar	35	28	0	234
Bhuntar	31	19	36	298
Shimla	22	17	4	453
Jammu	32	23	7	411
Srinagar	32	21	0	115
Amritsar	34	28	0	253
Patiala	34	29	0	441
Jaipur	33	27	0	277
Udaipur	31	26	12	373

Allahabad	35	28	0	528
Lucknow	35	26	0	476
Varanasi	35	27	tr	341
Dehradun	32	24	1	1655
Agartala	36	26	1	44
Ahmedabad	30	27	1	441
Bangalore	27	20	1	310
Bhubaneswar	32	24	30	483
Bhopal	32	25	8	658
Chennai	30	24	3	302
Guwahati	36	25	3	490
Hyderabad	35	22	2	392
Kolkata	33	27	32	573
Mumbai	26	24	2191732	
Nagpur	32	25	11	933
Patna	37	29	0	155
Pune	24	21	31	434
Thiruvananthapuram	29	23	10	705
Imphal	27	23	tr	429
Shillong	27	19	tr	481

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

RAINFALL

The axis of Monsoon trough at Sea level chart passes through Phalodi, Kota, Tonk and thence southeast-wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at many places over Himachal Pradesh, at a few places over Jammu and Kashmir, east Rajasthan and Uttarakhand and at isolated places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (3 cm and above) HIMACHAL PRADESH: Jogindernagar 13, Baijanth 12, Palampur 9, Guler and Banjar 5 each, Dharamshala and Bhuntar 4 each and Bajaura 3, JAMMU AND KASHMIR: Jammu Airport 5, PUNJAB: R.S.Dam Site 6 and Shahpurkandi 4, EAST RAJASTHAN: Kesarpura 8, Devel 5, Sallopat 4 and Bhungra, Kanva, Asnawar, Pindwara and Girva 3 each, WEST RAJASTHAN: Jawai Dam and Sumerpur 9 each, Bali 6 and Desuri 3 and UTTARAKHAND: Chamoli 6, Mukteshwar and Bhatwari 5 each, Tharali 4 and Munsiyari 3.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 26th July 2013 : Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and east Rajasthan.

Rain/thundershowers may occur at a few places over Uttar Pradesh during next 24 hours and increase thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Punjab and Haryana during next 24 hours and increase thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at a few places over rest of Jammu And Kashmir and at one or two places over west-Rajasthan.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 26th July 2013: Generally cloudy sky. Light rain /thundershowers may occur in some areas



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar not in favour of onion export ban

Amid rising onion prices hurting consumers, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar today said he was not in favour of a ban on onion exports, saying such a move will hit India's image as a global supplier of farm produce. The Minister said the rise in onion prices is a "temporary situation" as heavy rains in major producing states like Maharashtra have affected supplies.

"It is not fair to ban export of any agricultural commodities. ...India has now established its position as a major supplier of agricultural items in the global market. If we ban exports, this image will be affected. So, we are against export ban on onion," Pawar told reporters on the sidelines of a CII event on dairy sector.

The country's agricultural exports have increased to Rs 2.33 lakh crore during the 2012-13 fiscal, as against Rs 1.86 lakh crore in the previous year, he said.

According to sources, both Consumer Affairs and Commerce ministries are mulling over banning onion exports for short term to bring down its domestic prices and give relief to consumers, who are already burdened with overall price rise.

Asked when onion prices are expected to cool down, Pawar said, "It is a temporary situation. Heavy rains in key producing states has affected supplies. Rains has affected crops as well as transport and logistics."

The retail price of onion has risen to Rs 35-40 per kg in Delhi and most parts of the country, while the wholesale price has increased to Rs 25 per

kg at Lasalgoan in Maharashtra, Asia's biggest onion market.

Onion prices are likely to be under pressure till October when the new crop is expected to hit the market.

According to official data, India has exported 5,11,616 tonnes of onion amounting Rs 776.47 crore in first quarter of this fiscal against 5,17,274 tonnes in the year-ago period.

Although production is expected to be normal at around 15-16 million tonnes this year, lower crop in states like Tamil Nadu has put pressure on Maharashtra

BARC to set up 3 plants for processing alternate crops

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) will set up three multi-product radiation processing technology demonstration plants for high yielding varieties of basmati, potato and other alternate crops in Punjab.

A high-level team of BARC called on Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal here today, an official release said today.

The team comprising Associate Director Group and Head Isotope Applications and Radiopharmaceuticals Division Gursharan Singh, among others, informed the Chief Minister that the BARC would provide technology and engineering support for setting up of these plants which would also process onions, wheat, suji, maida, spices and other commodities.

The team also apprised Badal that the institute would also provide high yielding varieties of sugarcane, pulses including groundnuts to the Punjab Agriculture University (PAU) for its trials, which would be subsequently recommended to farmers for sowing.

Apart from this, team also agreed to suggest the technology for storage of potatoes in the state on scientific lines.

In another significant development, the BARC would set up an Isotope Hydrology Laboratory for carrying the groundwater investigations at Mohali.

The laboratory would be instrumental for detection of uranium, arsenic, phosphorous in ground water and its migration to determine the interconnectivity between aquifers and their recharge, age of water and water table assessment. The visiting team from BARC also assured the Chief Minister to assist the state by providing training to the staff and technical knowhow for running this high-tech laboratory.

The team would also assist PAU in submitting its research proposals of different identified crop improvement areas like mutation breeding, soil health improvement, crop nutrition management to the Board of Research and Nuclear Science (BRNS).

A detailed project for enhancing the shelf life of Kinnow, Litichi, Guava, Pear and Mushrooms would also be submitted to BRNS.

BARC also agreed to assist the state in long term field testing and demonstration of membrane based water purification technologies for domestic water purification, cycle mounted water purification and community size water purifications.

On the demonstration basis, the BARC agreed to install this technology on a tube well in Ludhiana city and in one of the Government Schools in Sri Muktsar Sahib district.

To ensure efficient liquid and solid waste management of hospitals, the state government would submit a status report to BARC detailing the volume, type of contamination and present practices of disposals of liquid and solid waste generated in the health sector.

The Chief Minister also mooted a proposal to the BARC for adopting five villages of the state to synergize the efforts of state for ensuring health and hygiene services to people.

The Chief Minister also demanded a sub centre of BARC in Punjab so as to effectively tackle the issues relating to environment and pollution in a holistic manner

Sandalwood finds smiles and sleaze sell better

A study by sociologist Prof GKKaranth of the Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC) revealed the Kannada film industry produces more adult-rated films than ever before, and much more than the national average.

The study also found that Kannada films undergo the maximum number of cuts at the hands of the censors. "What's surprising is there's actually a drop in adult films at the all-India level, while in Kannada it's on the rise," says the study.

There are three categories of film certification. 'U' stands for unrestricted exhibition, 'U/A' films are unrestricted with adult content, and 'A' films, of course, are restricted to adults only. Between 2005 and 2010, the share of 'U' rated films dropped from 61.7% to 49.7%. Filmmakers, it seems, are willing to forgo TV revenues by making A-rated movies, as 'A' films are not eligible for television broadcast. 'U/A' films have increased their share from

33.3% in 2005 to 41.3% in 2010, while over the same period, the share of 'A' rated films has nearly doubled, from 4.9% to 9.1%.

The study observes the decline had some very serious implications for the quality of films. "Considering the decline in the social conduct of family viewing of cinema and in theatres, certification of films other than 'U' is not a welcome trend," it states.

Censor cuts highest

Objectionable content is higher in Kannada films compared to other language films. In 2005, the board had exercised cuts in about 63% of certified Kannada films, compared to the national average of 45%. In 2005, nearly two-third of Kannada films underwent some extent of excision. In the five-year period, the cuts have increased from 62% to 63%. By contrast, cuts in other national language films have dropped from 48% to 38%. None of the films, be it U, UA or A, escaped the scissors of the Censor Board. In the surveyed period, 33% to 56% of U films were cut by the censors. U/A films fared worse, 69% to 89% of the films made during the period experienced cuts. 'A' films fared worst of all - 76% to 100% of 'A' films were chopped.

The rise of comedy

The days of emotion-heavy weepies and social melodramas are long gone, and comedy has taken centre stage. Between 2005 and 2010, the number of films with social themes declined, the slack being taken up by comedies and action thrillers. Nearly 75% of all Kannada films made in 2005 had 'social' themes. By 2010, that number had dropped to 55%. 'Action/thriller' films held steady, showing a marginal increase from 20.41% in 2005 to 21.16% in 2010. But the number of comedy films increased ten-fold, from a

miniscule 2.04% of all movies made in 2005, to 20.64% by 2010.

"Notwithstanding the encouragement by the government to make 'quality films', one finds the market opportunities determining the choice of themes (genres) of films made in recent years...What is of concern is the decline in 'social' films, that would have had an orientation towards family values, morals and similar other desirable themes, than merely action and thrillers."

Farmers take over disputed land

Social activist and Narmada Bachao Andolan leader Medha Patkar along with hundreds of farmers on Tuesday took possession of the disputed 85-acre land in the Shendra Industrial estate and started ploughing and sowing. Terming the acquisition of cultivable land by a private pharma major for industrial purpose as "state and corporate terrorism", Patkar has now demanded an SIT probe into each and every land acquisition that has taken place in the city.

The land acquired under the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) was a bone of contention between farmers, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation (MIDC) and a private pharma major. Farmers claimed that it was fraudulently acquired and handed over to the private company.

In view of the situation, the district collectorate called an emergency meeting of its senior officials that lasted till late in the evening, while the Aurangabad rural police deployed extra force at the spot to prevent any untoward incident. Patkar and the farmers even proposed to court arrest. However, they were not arrested as neither the MIDC nor the private firm company lodged a complaint of trespassing.

Patkar said, "We demand an SIT probe into the land acquisitions and allotment process being practised by the MIDC in Aurangabad. If found guilty of malpractices, strict action should be taken against MIDC officials. We have received documents showing that the prime cultivable and fertile land was fraudulently acquired by the MIDC and later handed over to a private company. Moreover, the company has not started its operations on the land even 5-6 years after acquiring it."

The protesting farmers claimed that 2.34 lakh hectares of cultivable land has been acquired for various projects of MIDC and Jhalar Kshetra, which will affect the lives of more than 300 farmers. They alleged that the land was acquired without even consulting the villagers. Moreover, in the whole deal, poor farmers are being cheated and treated badly, they alleged. The farmers said that the industries do not require soft cultivable land and could carry out their projects in rocky and non-cultivable barren land.

According to sources, the pharma company is engaged in the development, manufacture and commercialization of pharmaceutical products and has presence in over 30 countries. Despite repeated attempts, the officials of the company could not be reached for comments. Annasaheb Shinde, chief officer, MIDC, said, "No acquisition was done illegally as the MIDC had acquired 902 ha in Shendra area in 1999. Besides, the irrigation department acquired 45 ha in 2000, which later was transferred to the MIDC after we paid them." He said the MIDC will not approach the police against the farmers. "The land is currently under the possession of the private pharma company. If they wish, they may approach the police, but we are not going to lodge a complaint against the farmers for trespassing," he added.

The agitators decided that further discussion on the issue would be done on Wednesday.

Farmers insist on better water management

As rains are scarce even after the onset of the monsoon, the farmers in the district stressed for better water management of the water released from Vaigai reservoir so that double-crop areas benefit.

After the ryots took to the street demanding water for irrigation of double-crop areas, the government had ordered the release of Vaigai water on July 15. Though, farmers in the double-crop areas commenced cultivation works optimistically, their counterparts in other blocks, especially Chellampatti, Peraiyur and Usilampatti, expressed their concerns about the drastic fall in the ground water levels in their area. They urged the district administration to consider storing the excess water from the double-crop areas in tanks to recharge ground water level. "It will be beneficial if the water released for double crop areas is stored in tanks so that the ground water level rises in the adjacent wells," Chellam, a farmer from Alankulam, suggested during the recent farmers' grievance redress meet at the Madurai collectorate.

The farmers clarified that they are demanding water for their survival. S Muthupandi, a farmer and district secretary of Tamil Nadu Dairy Farmers Association, said even green pastures for the cattle have disappeared due to water scarcity. "We are not demanding water for irrigation. We plead the district administration to divert some excess water through Thirumangalam main canal and store it in the village tanks. It will boost the ground water

level and aid the growth of grass for our cattle," he said.

Pandian, president of Madurai District Farmers Association, also pointed out that the water table is very critical in almost eight of the 13 blocks in Madurai district. "There are nearly 48,856 irrigation wells in the district and most are dry. The district administration should give thrust to rain water harvesting. Farming community should be thoroughly sensitised about its importance," he suggested.

FDA to check food quality at stalls

Department of Food and Drug Administration will keep a strict vigil on the quality of street food served to devotees and Kanwariyas during the month of Shrawan.

According to designated officer, FDA, Hari Shankar Singh, all the food inspectors have been given direction to check that the quality and standards of edibles is maintained by vendors at crowded places. The checking will be emphasised at all the six routes from where Kanwariyas will enter the city. "We are also going to keep a record of the mobile phone numbers and names of each vendor who would be putting their stalls in fairs, near temples and kanwariya camps on different routes," he informed. However, there are no restrictions or limitations on the number of food stalls to be put in an area, he added.

Crops on two lakh hectares may be hit by rains

The excessive rains this season have apparently left a higher than expected trail of destruction in the region. Not only have they claimed 85 lives so far but crops on as much as two lakh hectares-eight times the area

of Nagpur city-may have been hit.

After the first bout of heavy rains the state's agriculture department had estimated that close to 1 lakh hectare of farm land would be affected. However, as more data come in, it is expected the tally may be twice that in the Nagpur division alone. This accounts for over 10% of the area under cultivation in the division. Even as the ground level survey to estimate the exact loss continues, the count so far says more than half of the crop has been damaged in 1.36 lakh hectares. The losses are below 50% of standing crop on another 60,000 hectares.

Nagpur division makes the eastern part of Vidarbha region and includes Nagpur, Wardha, Bhandara, Gondia, Gadchiroli and Chandrapur districts. The worst affected is Gadchiroli in terms of rainfall received in the season. The extent of damage on farmlands is more in Nagpur so far with 59,000 hectares affected. Out of this more than half the crop is damaged on over 30,000 hectares.

Meanwhile, the Lonar Taluka which has the famous crater created by meteor impact received 490mm of rains on Monday, claimed the Amravati's divisional commissioner D R Bansod. "Even as the final survey will begin after rains recede, we have been gathering data through telephone, metrological department as well as direct inputs from the farmers. There is every chance that the extent of the affected land may even cross 2 lakh hectares," said an officer in the state's agriculture department handling the affairs Nagpur division.

The monsoons haven't ended yet. With so much downpour, the fields need a dry spell of 15 days at least to ensure healthy growth of crops. If rains continue as they have, it may further worsen the situation. The crops need

both water and sunlight during the different stages of growth.

The Naxal hit Gadchiroli district has received highest rainfall at 1110mm. Large areas have been water logged which is preventing survey, said the district collector Abhay Krishna. He said Sironcha taluka in the southern part of the district was severely hit and almost cut off. Around 80 families were shifted to safer places temporarily. Some of the interior pockets named Nav Sanjeevan areas on a government scheme to provide assistance always remain cut off during rains. The district administration provides rations enough to last for 3 months at such places. "Heavy rains are not unusual here," he said.

According to official figures, rains damaged as many as 21,000 homes out of which 1600 were completely ruined in Nagpur division. In Amravati division more than 8,000 homes have been damaged, with 1971 totally razed.

Scanty rain hits paddy crop hard

The monsoon that began on a bountiful note in June, is now dragging the state towards extreme rain deficit situation because of frequent low pressure troughs over Odisha, which is extracting all the moisture content from Bihar.

According to meteorological department, between June 1 and July 24 Bihar has recorded an average rainfall of 331mm against the normal of 435mm, a deficit of 24%. Till June 30, rain was good in almost all the districts and some of the districts figured in rain surplus list. Districts like Kishanganj, Purnia and Araria still fall under surplus category.

Incidentally, during the last 10 years, this July is the driest in over 17 districts of Bihar including Patna, which received only 46mm rainfall against the normal of 263mm, a deficit of 83%. As for entire Bihar, the state recorded 154mm rainfall in July against a normal of 266mm, a shortfall of 42%.

Districts like Gaya, Jehanabad, Aurangabad, Nawada, Vaishali, Sitamarhi and Bhagalpur have a shortfall of 73%, 50%, 59%, 62%, 63%, 69% and 55%, respectively.

What is more worrying is that Met doesn't forecast any monsoon revival in south Bihar till August 1. "The entire south Bihar will remain dry for the whole week," said Patna Met director AK Sen here on Wednesday.

"Frequent low pressure over Odisha is taking away the moisture from Bihar and even Jharkhand, resulting in almost nil rainfall. The monsoon has weakened over the state. We are not expecting any revival in near future as the low pressure is holding back the current," added Sen.

The present low-pressure trough is moving towards Chhattisgarh, which means its impact will lessen and even light rainfall will elude Bihar.

Deficient monsoon rain threatens to take a heavy toll on the state's agriculture sector, specially paddy production, this year. Farmers have been able to plant paddy seedlings in only 37% of the targeted 89.6 % till date.

The meteorological department has already sounded a warning, saying the next 10 days would be crucial for the state. "If the current dry spell continues even in the first week of August, several districts may face drought condition. If there is rain in August, paddy sowing coverage would improve," said deputy director, agriculture, Ashok Prasad.

Agriculture department officials said in most of the districts the paddy saplings are starting to wilt due to lack of rains. "The department has geared up to prepare contingency plan for dry districts, which will be ready in a few days. The farmers will be provided seedlings for short-term paddy, oilseeds and pulses like urad," said deputy director, seeds, Samir Kumar.

Will Kunigal Stud Farm stay or go?

With Union railway minister Mallikarjun Kharge making it clear that he wants the Hassan-Bangalore railway line to be completed before the 2014 elections, the fate of the Kunigal Stud Farm hangs in the balance.

The bone of contention is whether the railway track should cut through the 350-acre stud farm - as the railways wants -- skirt it, go underground or on a bridge.

Kharge wants the state government and industrialist Vijay Mallya who breeds horses at the farm to arrive at a solution which will help speed up the long-delayed project.

Rajkumar Khatri, principal secretary, infrastructure development department, said chief secretary SV Ranganath will convene a meeting next week to look into the possibility of acquiring land at the farm for the track.

But acquiring land may not help. The only two possibilities left after detailed exploration are deviation across the periphery and over the lake or an underground tunnel. The first is at the mercy of the farmers and it may work if the farmers are compensated handsomely. The second option is thought to be too expensive and time consuming.

The first plan had the line running through the middle of the farm which effectively meant it would have to shut shop. The state government then decided to work out a compromise formula with Vijay Mallya.

After a couple of inspections by the Southern Railways officials, as the revised plan made to run the line on the farm periphery and atop the lake and that involved constructing a bridge at a huge cost. A couple of farmers needed to be compensated for lost agricultural land.

Farmers appealed to the high court and the court in February held that the government and the owner must consider other alternatives rather than displace farmers from their agricultural lands. The court also ruled that Kunigal Stud Farm was no heritage site.

The court suggested an underground tunnel construction could well save the farm and that it requires only 12 acres of the farm. Railway officials, it is learnt, reportedly said the tunnel is not cost effective and time consuming. The meeting next week could effectively decide whether the Kunigal Stud Farm will have to down its shutters.

Climate Smart Village model to be implemented in Bihar

The Climate Smart Village model is a unique initiative by Climate Change Agriculture, Food and Security (CCAFS) in India, undertaken currently in Haryana and Bihar, to promote agriculture practices that will mitigate the effects of climate change on agriculture and help communities adapt to climate change to ultimately become resilient to extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and delayed monsoons.

Climate Smart Agriculture involves a portfolio of interventions that are chosen to suit the local environment and the community's needs. These are adopted at the village level to create Climate Smart Village models. The idea is to start small but upscale the scheme to include several villages in different parts of the country, said an expert.

The interventions range from index-based insurance, weather forecasting services, efficient irrigation and water management, conservation agriculture, inter-cropping and crop diversification, minimum tillage, laser land levelling and agro forestry to name a few, said another expert.

In Bihar, CCAFS works along with several partner organizations in Rajapakar, Bali Bathna and Lal Pokhar in Vaishali district. These villages were selected in 2011 based on their suitability, and willingness of households, to adopt climate smart interventions that could be carried out over a period of time to evaluate the results.

The key climate-related issues in the district are frequent droughts, water logging and flooding, and decreasing annual rainfall.

The district has approximately 90.4 km² of area, which remain permanently waterlogged. Some farmlands have imperfect drainage of the soil, limiting optimum air-water relationship at the root zone affecting the crop growth. Increasing soil salinity is also a matter of concern in some areas of the district.

Farmers in the district have taken well to these climate smart agriculture practices and are proactively working with local partners on the field to implement the same.

As CCAFS collaborates on a participatory model, "we work with CIMMYT (Centre for Improvement of Wheat and Maize), IRRI (International Rice

Research Institute) and local government bodies such as farmers' groups and self-help groups", said South Asia coordinator Pramod Agrawal.. Agrawal is in town to share more information on Climate Smart Villages and to understand how this can transform the agricultural landscape of the State to make it more climate resilient.

CCAFS is a 10-year research programme that seeks to overcome the threats to agriculture and food security due to climate change. At present, CCAFS works in South Asia, East Africa, West Africa, SE Asia and Latin America.

Weather – Chennai

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Thursday, Jul 25

Max Min

32° | 27°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:52

Humidity: 70

Sunset: 06:38

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1006

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Jul 26

Max Min

32° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Jul 27



32° | 25°

Cloudy

Sunday

Jul 28



31° | 26°

Overcast

Monday

Jul 29



30° | 25°

Overcast

Tuesday

Jul 30



30° | 26°

Overcast

Wednesday

Jul 31



31° | 26°

Overcast

Rain: 19.3 Sunrise: 05:38

Humidity: 84 Sunset: 07:16

Wind: normal Barometer: 998

Sharad Pawar not in favour of onion export ban

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saying such a move will hit the country's image as a global supplier of farm produce.

The minister said the rise in onion prices is a "temporary situation" as heavy rains in major producing states like Maharashtra have affected supplies.

"It is not fair to ban export of any agricultural commodities. ...India has now established its position as a major supplier of agricultural items in the global market. If we ban exports, this image will be affected. So, we are against export ban on onion," Pawar told reporters on the sidelines of a CII event on dairy sector.

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Asked when onion prices are expected to cool down, Pawar said, "It is a temporary situation. Heavy rains in key producing states has affected supplies. Rains has affected crops as well as transport and logistics."

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Onion prices are likely to be under pressure till October when the new crop is expected to hit the market.

According to official data, India has exported 5,11,616 tonnes of onion amounting Rs. 776.47 crore in first quarter of this fiscal against 5,17,274 tonnes in the year-ago period.

Although production is expected to be normal at around 15-16 million tonnes this year, lower crop in states like Tamil Nadu has put pressure on Maharashtra.

Nendran banana may fetch more

Farmers will be able to get better rates for the Nendran banana, say farm varsity experts. This banana is grown mostly in Coimbatore, Erode, Tiruchi and Kanyakumari districts. It is planted during April-May and October-November to coincide with the Onam festival. Stating that there has been a sizeable increase in banana (including nendran variety) acreage and production over the past five years, the expert at the Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (Demic) at TNAU said that the State recorded the highest production share with 26.47 per cent in 2011, followed by Maharashtra (13.5 per cent) and Gujarat (13.3 per cent).

The area under banana increased from 5.69 lakh hectares in 2005-06 to 8.16 lakh ha in 2011-12 (all India).

The area under nendran variety alone is estimated at 18-20 per cent of this. In Tamil Nadu, banana is raised in around 1.25 lakh ha. The peak season of nendran fruit is Jan- Feb. The present price is Rs 32/kg. After analysing the price trend here, Demic experts perceive the rates to hit Rs 34 and Rs 37 in September, before touching Rs 33-35 in October.

Profit booking crushes castor

Castor futures declined more than 2 per cent on the NCDEX after traders booked the profit. With this, slow demand pulled down castor in spot market.

On the NCDEX castor August contract decreased Rs 79 to Rs 3,365 a quintal, with an open interest of 167,880 lots. NCDEX September castor

was down Rs 77 to Rs 3,466 with an open interest of 76,500 lots. On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange (RCX) castor for September shed Rs 57 to Rs 3,579 .

RCX spot castor declined by Rs 7.50 to Rs 3,422.50 .

About 30,000-35,000 bags of castor arrived in Gujarat and price was quoted at Rs 680-695 for 20 kg.

Around 2,200-2,300 bags arrived in Saurashtra at Rs 650-675. Castor oil declined by Rs 5 to Rs 712 for 10 kg.

Spot rubber skids

Spot rubber declined on Wednesday. The market lost ground on buyer resistance as covering buyers stayed back letting the prices to cool down following yet another weak closing on NMCE.

Sheet rubber declined to Rs 195 (Rs 198) a kg, according to traders. The grade finished unchanged at Rs 195 at Kottayam and Kochi, as quoted by the Rubber Board.

August futures dropped further to Rs 190.70 (Rs 191.53); September Rs 180.45 (Rs 181.49); October Rs 171 (Rs 171.04); November Rs 163.50 (Rs 163.98); and December to Rs 161.90 (Rs 164.04) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) closed at Rs 153.11 (Rs 152.95) at Bangkok.

July futures closed at ¥254.0 (Rs 150.06) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates Rs/kg were: RSS-4: 195 (198); RSS-5: 189 (190); Ungraded: 179 (180); ISNR 20: 180 (180); and Latex 60%: 162 (162).

Pepper continues to stay hot

Pepper futures and the spot, continued to stay hot on good demand amid tight availability and consequently all the active contracts on the NMCE ended much above the previous day close.

The current monthly internal requirement is pegged at 3,000 tonnes and as against this the availability is claimed to be much less.

Added to this is the reports of firmer trend in other origins. All these factors have aided the price rise, they pointed out. On the spot, 12 tonnes pepper from Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts arrived and 15 tonnes were traded at Rs 386 a kg.

Aug, Sept and Oct contracts on the NMCE increased by Rs 881, Rs 1,202 and Rs 1,125 respectively to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 41,800, Rs 41,901 and Rs 41,600 a quintal. Total turnover moved up by three tonnes to 41 tonnes while total net open position decreased by 12 tonnes to 85 tonnes.

Spot prices rose by Rs 300 at Rs 38,600 (ungarbled) and Rs 40,600 (garbled) on good demand amid tight supply.

Indian parity in the international market was up at \$7,100 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$7,350 for the US following the rise in price coupled with the strengthening of the rupee against the dollar.

Vietnam has raised its V Asta price to \$ 6.800 a tonne while Brazil offered B Asta at \$6,400-6,500. Indonesia was at \$6,625 a tonne.

To check onion price rise, Govt may look at ban on exports

With onion prices continuing to rise across the country, the Government may be compelled to consider placing a temporary ban on exports among other policy intervention.

An inter-Ministerial team of senior officials from the Ministries of Commerce, Agriculture and Consumer Affairs will meet soon to take stock of the onion situation in the country to see if market intervention was required, a Commerce Department official told *Business Line*.

A representative from NAFED, the Government's agriculture procurement and marketing agency, will also attend the meeting. The possibility of selling subsidised onions through NAFED mobile vans is also likely to be considered, the official added.

NAFED has in the past come to the rescue of the Government by providing partial relief to consumers by selling onions at low prices when retail prices shoot up. Although Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar has openly voiced his views against banning onion exports, the Commerce and Consumer Affairs Ministries are yet to take a view.

"The committee of Joint Secretaries will examine all factors, including the movement of domestic prices, the reason for rising prices, existing international prices and the onion stock in the country before taking a view on the matter," the official said.

Onion prices have risen to over Rs 40 a kg in the retail market, especially after heavy rains hit transportation.

The average retail price rise in the country over last month has been Rs 10-20 with the steepest hike in Delhi, Siliguri, Indore and Dehradun, according to Government estimates.

Onion prices have risen mainly because of heavy rains in producer States, including Maharashtra disrupting production and transportation to mandis. Prices are likely to ease only in October when the new onion crop comes into the market.

The country exports 10 per cent of the total onion production.

It exported 5,11,616 tonnes worth Rs 776.47 crore in the first quarter of the fiscal against 5,17,274 tonnes in the year-ago period.

Monsoon surplus of June being carried into July

The heavy monsoon over Central and West India and adjoining North-West India is set to continue with a fresh rain-generating system forecast to form in the Bay of Bengal.

The surplus run of monsoon in June will now have extended into July, usually rainiest of the four monsoon months (34 per cent of the total).

RAINIEST JUNE

June contributes only 14 per cent of the total but this year saw the heaviest downpours since 2001, with rainfall registering 32 per cent above average.

July had failed farmers often during the past few years, putting the crops under heavy stress. But entering the last lap, it has mostly been above normal until now, having dipped below only a couple of times.

The monsoon is forecast to take off later into August, which is the second rainiest of the season, accounting for 31 per cent.

STRONG MONSOON

Thus, the 2013 monsoon is promising to be the strongest on show in recent times. Sustaining its run was a low-pressure area originating in the Bay of Bengal.

It had crossed the coast and was sitting pretty over Odisha and adjoining Chhattisgarh on Wednesday.

This system pulled in monsoon flows from both the Arabian Sea and West Bengal, bringing heavy precipitation across Central and West India.

Latest news on this front is a follow-up system brewing the Bay will scale up the monsoon yet again.

US National Centres for Environmental Prediction said that it saw a track of heavy monsoon torrents moving west from East-central India to West India.

RAIN ALERT

Heavy rains are likely over Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mumbai-Konkan and Gujarat, apart from the West Coast.

An India Met Department update said that the 24 hours ending on Wednesday morning saw rain or thundershowers at most places along the West Coast.

Rain lashed Madhya Pradesh, East Gujarat, interior Maharashtra and Lakshadweep.

Chief amounts of rainfall (in cm) recorded were Mumbai (Santa Cruz), Mumbai (Colaba), and Bhira: 22 cm each; Mahabaleshwar: 13; Alibagh:14; Ratnagiri: 11; and Dahanu: 19.

On Thursday, it forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall one or two places over East Gujarat, Saurashtra, Kutch, Konkan and Goa.

EXTENDED FORECAST

Heavy rainfall would occur at one or two places over coastal Karnataka and Kerala.

On Friday, heavy rains have been forecast at one or two places over Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, East Gujarat, Konkan, Goa, Coastal Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Coastal Karnataka and Kerala.

An extended outlook for four days until July 31 said that rains may lash many places over Gangetic plains, Gujarat, sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Jharkhand and the north eastern States.

Rainfall would occur at many places along the West Coast and also at a few places over Central India.

Pawar opposes ban

Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar is not in favour of a ban on onion exports. In reply to a query, Pawar said it was not fair to ban exports of any agri-commodity, as it would affect the image of India as a reliable supplier. Agri-commodity exports touched Rs 2.33 lakh crore in 2012-13 against last year's Rs 1.85 lakh crore, Pawar told reporters on the sidelines of India Dairy Summit 2013, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry. Spiralling onion prices in recent weeks have led to a demand in some quarters for banning exports to boost domestic availability. On the onion price rise, Pawar said it was a temporary phenomenon as heavy rains in key growing producing States had affected supplies.

Dealers stay away from edible oils market

Bearish trend continued in spot and physical edible oils market on slack demand and expectation of higher kharif oilseeds output.

Due to heavy rain volumes remained thin and need-based. Groundnut oil, soyabean and sunflower refined oil declined by Rs 5 for 10 kg each while

cotton refined oil dropped by Re 1. Palmolein and rapeseed oil ruled unchanged.

In local market due to continuous bearish trend in recent days stockists keep away from taking fresh buying risk.

During the day resellers off loaded about 80-100 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 523 for ready delivery and at the end of the day there were no buyers.

Toward the day's close, Liberty was quoting palmolein at Rs 533 ex JNPT and Rs 535 ex Shapur, super palmolein Rs 570 for July-August and super deluxe Rs 590. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 535 for July to September, soyabean refined oil Rs 635 July to September and sunflower refined oil Rs 800 for July-August.

Allana was quoting palmolein at Rs 532-535 and super palmolein Rs 570. Gokul's rates were Rs 535 for July.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil ruled steady on good prospect of kharif output. Prices were Rs 1,550 for *teliatin* and Rs 975 for loose (10 kg).

Soyabean arrivals were about 1.45-1.50 lakh bags and its prices were Rs 3,300-3,400 ex mandi and Rs 3,420-3,460 for plant delivery.

Mustard seeds arrivals were 75,000 bags and the prices were Rs 2,970-3,560.

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil's August contracts settled lower at MYR 2,310 (MYR 2,346), September at MYR 2,254 (MYR 2,285) and October at MYR 2,222 (MYR 2,258) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) : groundnut oil 975 (980), soya refined oil 635 (640), sunflower exp. ref. 740 (745), sunflower ref. 800 (805), rapeseed ref. oil 680 (680), rapeseed expeller ref. 650 (650) cottonseed ref. oil 634 (635) and palmolein 525 (525).

Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Rs 575/10 kg for Malaysian super palmolein-August delivery.

Poultry feed to get cheaper

Following a downtrend in the prices of its key ingredients over the last few days, poultry feed products are all set to turn cheaper by the end of this week.

Aditya Mishra, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that following a continuous fall in the cost of production, feed prices are set to turn cheaper within a couple of days.

Prices of soyameal, mustard de-oiled cake and bajra have come further down this week. Feed prices may decrease by Rs 400-600 a tonne, he added.

In the physical market, soyameal moved further down by Rs 1,915 and sold at Rs 31,300 a tonne.

Bajra dropped by Rs 40 to Rs 1,260 a quintal, di-calcium phosphate dropped by 20 paisa and was at Rs 34.80 a kg; MBM sold at 33 a kg while maize dropped by Rs 45 to Rs 1,440-1,560 a quintal.

Mustard de-oiled cake failed to retain its previous level, dropped by Rs 800 and sold at Rs 14,000 a tonne, DRB went further down by Rs 600 to Rs 10,200 a tonne while rice bran oil ruled at 54 a kg, remained unchanged.

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, boiler and chick improved marginally on buying while egg continued to rule flat on Wednesday. Broiler improved by Rs 5 and quoted at Rs 65-70 a kg, egg sold at Rs 2.90, while chick went for Rs 14-16, Rs 6 up from previous levels.

Turmeric trade expects fresh orders next month

The turmeric trade hopes to get fresh upcountry orders only from August. "At present no turmeric exporter is getting huge orders from North India and only from the first week of August they will get fresh orders. This year though the farmers could not sow the turmeric due to non-release of water in the canals and also the adverse seasonal conditions, the farmers are having adequate stock with them for next year. Similarly the turmeric is available in other States such as Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Assam. So there will be no scarcity for the yellow spice," said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He admitted that the present price is not feasible for the turmeric farmers and because of heavy production of turmeric in Andhra Pradesh the spice is available at low price when compared to Erode turmeric.

Now some traders are buying quality stocks.

The arrival to the four markets has started improving and on Wednesday 3,700 bags arrived 60 per cent bags were sold.

All the hybrid and some quality finger variety turmeric were procured by the traders for their local orders.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,199-6,599 and the root variety Rs 3,799-5,925 a quintal.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 5,647-7,275; the root variety Rs 5,490-6,112.

Of the arrival of 623 bags, 251 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,339-6,814; the root variety Rs 5,200-6,072.

Of the 266 bags arrived, 235 found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety quoted Rs 5,448-6,812; the root variety Rs 4,899-6,099.

Of the 927 bags arrived, 917 were traded.

Rains, higher sowing pound pulses

luggish trend continued in pulse seeds and pulses on slack demand and buying support. Besides, adequate monsoon rains this season and enthusiastic sowing reports have also added to sluggish trend in pulse seeds and pulses. Poor demand dragged Tur (Maharashtra) by Rs 150 in the past one week to Rs 4,200-50 a quintal, while tur (Madhya Pradesh) declined to Rs 3,600-50 (down Rs 200).

Tur dal (full) was at Rs 6,100-6,200, tur dal (sawa no.) at Rs 5,600-5,800, while tur marka ruled at Rs 6,600-6,700.

Slack demand has also dragged masoor and its dal. Masoor (bold) in the past one week has declined by Rs 150 to Rs 4,200-50 , while masoor (medium) ruled at Rs 3,900-4,000 (down Rs 100-200). Masoor dal (average) was quoted at Rs 4,825-50 , masoor dal (bold) at Rs 4,925-50 , while masoor dal (bold) ruled at Rs 5,025-50 .

Moong and urad also declined on weak demand with moong (bold) being quoted at Rs 4,900-5,000 (down Rs 100) , while moong (medium) ruled at

Rs 4,500-4,700 . Moong dal (medium) was at Rs 6,000-6,100 , moong dal (bold) at Rs 6,600-6,700 , while moong mongar ruled at Rs 6,800-6,900 (down Rs 200). Poor demand also dragged urad by about Rs 100 a quintal in the past one week with urad (bold) at Rs 3,275-3,300 , while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 2,900-3,100 . Urad dal (medium) was 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 respectively.

Sugar slips on poor stockists buying

Sugar prices ruled slightly weak on Wednesday due to slack demand.

In Vashi market, spot rates declined by Rs 8 for S-grade and Rs 30 a quintal for M-grade . Naka prices ruled steady. Mill tender rates were down by Rs 5-10 on poor stockist demand.

Need-based volume kept morale weak, said traders.

A Vashi-based wholesaler said, “due to heavy rain in city retail brokers and buyers were away from the market. Transportation services got affected on second day.

Volume was thin with need-base retail purchases. Poor demand from retailers – bulk consumers despite Ramzan and ample supply from mills kept overall activities limited. Now new month’s demand will provide further direction for the market”.

In Vashi market arrivals declined to about 58-60 truck loads (of 100 bags each) and local dispatches were restricted to about 56-58 truck loads.

On Tuesday, merely 14-15 mills sold 28,000-30,000 bags at Rs 2,925-3,000 (Rs 2,930-3,000) for S-grade and Rs 3,020-3,220 (Rs 3,030-3,220) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates : S-grade Rs 3,056-3,142 (Rs 3,064-3,142) and M-grade Rs 3,162-3,321 (Rs 3,192-3,321).
Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,020-3,080 (Rs 3,020-3,080) and M-grade Rs 3,130-3,220 (Rs 3,130-3,220).

Copra flares up on thin arrivals, corporate demand

Coconut oil prices firmed up this week both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu due to thin copra arrivals. The prices shot up at Rs 70/kg in Kerala (Rs 67), while it has gone up to Rs 65 in Tamil Nadu (Rs 63).

Copra prices have also surged to Rs 4,800 a quintal in Kerala (Rs 4,675) and the rates were quoting at Rs 4,700 in Tamil Nadu (Rs 4,550).

Prakash B. Rao, Vice-President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA), pointed out that the sudden spurt in copra prices was mainly because of large quantity purchase by corporates from Tamil Nadu. The rates are likely to remain steady this week due to huge price gap between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

He expressed the hope that copra prices may improve further with the commencement of festival season in North India next month which would boost sales.

The palm oil price was slightly weak this week at Rs 54/kg and palm kernel oil remained steady at Rs 55.

Thalath Mahamood, former President, COMA, said that the continuing rains have affected copra arrivals resulting the price rise.

Bharat N.Khona, former Board Member, COMA, said that there has been a sharp rise in prices in spite of no genuine demand from up country buyers.

It is seen that there is a speculative tone in the market as is evident from the quoting of Rs 990 for 15-kg loose coconut oil as on today against Rs 950 quoted two days ago.

Business Standard

Sugarcane, Cotton, Wheat gave maximum returns to farmers

The analysis was limited only to crops for which government determines Minimum Support Price

Ever wondered which crop has given maximum return to farmers in the last few years, or cultivation in which state is most profitable for the growers, a recent study perhaps has the answers to these

According to a analysis done by the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP), among all the crops, in absolute terms sugarcane has given the highest average gross return per hectare to farmers between 2008-09 to 2010-11, followed by cotton and thereafter wheat.

The analysis was limited only to crops for which the government determines the Minimum Support Price (MSP) and excludes high-value crops like fruits, vegetables, poultry etc. It has been done by Ashok Vishandas and B Lukka from the CACP.

ALSO READ: Govt to reimburse Rs 719 cr to CCI for MSP buying

It showed that for a farmer sugarcane gave an average return of Rs 82,800 for each hectare of land, the highest among all the crops. The worst performer during this period (2008-09 to 2010-11) was sunflower which gave a negative return to the farmers in relation to its cost of production during the same period. Sunflower gave a gross return which was around 40% less than its cost of production.

In absolute terms, the average returns per hectare for a cotton farmers between 2008-09 to 2010-11 works out to be around Rs 29,100 per hectares, while for those cultivating wheat was Rs 24,300 per hectare.

“In the last decade as well, out of the 22 crops analyzed, 8 crops (wheat, barley, tur, lentil, rapeseed and mustard, sesame, cotton and sugarcane) have reaped 100% or more gross profit, another 10 crops (paddy, maize, bajra, gram, urad, moong, soyabeans, ragi and groundnut), could post a profitability of 50 to 100% and only three crops (jowar, ragi and groundnut) could post a profitability of less than 50%,” the Commission.

The worst performer in this period also was sunflower.

The analysis shows that state-wise, Haryana, Kerala, Punjab and Uttarakhand gave the highest profitability to farmers, which was in excess of Rs 30,000 per hectare for all crops between 2008-09 to 2010-11, while Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh gave farmers a profitability which was more than the national average. The worst was in Jharkhand, Assam and Chhattisgarh as these states had higher cost of production.

ALSO READ: MSP hikes isn't the only tool to incentivise farming

“ The analysis takes into account only those crops for which MSP is declared and not the broad agriculture sector and excluded high valued horticulture, fruit and vegetables crops, animal husbandry and fisheries,” the study said.

The study said as there have been allegations of skeweness in price determination and lack of transparency by the CACP while determining the cost of production, the government should immediately constitute an expert group to assign suitable numerical weight to each determinant of MSP like labour, diesel etc in accordance with their relative importance.

Chana falls by 1% on sluggish demand

Speculators reduced their positions on the back of sluggish demand in the spot market

Chana prices fell by 1.03 to Rs 2,779 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators reduced their holdings on account of sluggish spot demand against sufficient supplies.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, chana for delivery in September fell by Rs 29, or 1.03%, to Rs 2,779 per quintal, with an open interest of 80,710 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in August declined by Rs 27, or 0.98%, to Rs 2,727 per quintal in 1,64,560 lots.

Market analysts said speculators reduced their positions on the back of sluggish demand in the spot market against sufficient supplies, mainly led the fall in chana prices at futures trade

Potato gains by 2.9% on upsurge in demand

Speculators enlarged their positions on the back of upsurge in demand in the spot market

Potato prices gained 2.88% to Rs 678.90 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions after rising spot demand against limited arrivals.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato for delivery in September gained Rs 19, or 2.88%, to Rs 678.90 per quintal in business turnover of 185 lots. Potato for delivery in August contract traded higher by Rs 16.20, or 2.28%, to Rs 726.50 per quintal in 175 lots.

Market analysts said speculators enlarged their positions on the back of upsurge in demand in the spot market against restricted arrivals from producing region mainly led an upward movements in potato prices at futures trade.

Relaunched pepper futures contracts evoke poor response

IPSTA having very little business, while NMCE also failed to attract participants

Re- launched pepper futures contracts at the National Multi-Commodity Exchange [NMCE] as well as regional counter, India Pepper and Spices Trade Association [IPSTA], has evoked very poor response due to stringent quality measures and lack of confidence among the pepper fraternity. IPSTA, without a pan India reach and run down software, is having very little business, only in a range of 25-30 tones daily. NMCE also failed to attract participants even after a month of the re-launch.

Hedgers are not willing to deposit pepper for physical delivery because of the stringent quality specifications agreed upon by IPSTA and NMCE with the Forward Markets Commission [FMC] . The strict quality parameters hinder the stake holders of the business in actively trading in contract business. Arbitragers and exporters are shying away from both the exchanges and this may pave the way for a slow death of futures trading of pepper.

FMC had granted permission to re-start the contracts in June. FMC had directed to stop futures trading in pepper in May due to a series of complaints over the quality of stocks maintained at various warehouses. Because of mineral oil content in the stocks, trade was in serious trouble,

delivery was very nominal and FMC was forced to stop trading. Later IPSTA had approached FMC for re-starting contracts with an assurance to maintain the quality of pepper and got permission. IPSTA had started six contracts beginning from June onwards and later NMCE.

Experts told then that maintenance of quality is a serious issue in the case of black pepper and if exchanges can ensure the quality and keep it mineral oil free that would be beneficial for the industry in general and good for the credibility of Indian pepper in the overseas markets.

According to a leading exporter, the trade could not cop up with the strict quality parameters of physical delivery agreed upon by NMCE and IPSTA with FMC. As per the specifications, the stocks have to be completely free from visible mouldy berries which can be attained only by steam washing and sterilizing. These are very costly affair and only a few exporters have these kind of machines which is used for their own exports.

Kishore Shyamji, former president, IPSTA and a leading exporter told Business Standard that the stringent quality measures disrupts business in futures trading. 'Money power' still rules and controls the business to a great extent, this is not good for doing healthy business. Instead of price discovery, price manipulations occurs several times, some leading traders said. Also FMC has fixed a daily maximum price fluctuation of Rs 500/tonne for IPSTA, while 4 per cent price variation is allowed in NMCE.

So literally people are afraid of trading with IPSTA as the fluctuation level is limited compared to NMCE. This disparity had affected the volume of business very badly at IPSTA, Kishore added. IPSTA has approached FMC to enhance the limit and the Commission has raised this level to Rs 1000/tonne. Yet this is not implemented.

Giby Mathew, managing director, Celebrus, a Commodity broking firm said that stringent quality conditions affect the trade very badly as it is a very costly affair to maintain such high quality. But in the long run this will be inevitable as quality is a serious concern in the overseas markets. We have to change according to the global market requirements, he said.

Meanwhile, the quality check of the stocks that are having mineral oil content is progressing on a slow pace as samples were tested from 2 warehouses. Stocks of 5 warehouses, where around 7000 tones of pepper is stocked, have to be cleared.

Mentha oil down by 0.6% on profit-booking

Market analysts attributed the fall in mentha oil futures to profit-booking by speculators

Amid profit-booking by speculators and weak domestic demand, mentha oil prices today fell by 0.63% to Rs 872 per kg.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, mentha oil prices for delivery in July traded lower by Rs 5.50, or 0.63%, to Rs 872 per kg in business turnover of 916 lots.

Likewise, the oil prices for delivery in August shed Rs 5.50, or 0.62%, to Rs 889.50 per kg in 476 lots.

Market analysts attributed the fall in mentha oil futures to profit-booking by speculators, subdued demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position.

Crude palm oil falls by 0.8% on profit-booking

Profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels influenced crude palm oil prices

Crude palm oil prices fell by 0.80% to Rs 498.50 per 10 kg in futures trading today as speculators booked profits at prevailing higher levels, driven sluggish demand in the spot market.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, crude palm oil prices for delivery in July fell by Rs 4, or 0.80%, to Rs 498.50 per 10 kg in business turnover of 53 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in August contract traded lower by Rs 3.40, or 0.68%, to Rs 497 per 10 kg in 200 lots.

Market analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels, sluggish demand in the spot market, influenced crude palm oil prices at futures trade

Cardamom gains by 1.7% on strong demand

Speculators enlarged their positions amid a firm trend at spot market on strong demand

Cardamom prices gained for the third straight day by surging 1.72% to Rs 804.70 per kg in futures trade today as speculators enlarged their positions amid a firm trend at spot market on strong demand.

Tight stocks position in the physical market following restricted arrivals from producing region also led an upsurge in cardamom.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in August added Rs 13.60, or 1.72%, to Rs 804.70 per kg in business turnover of 1,244 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in September contract gained Rs 9, or 1.11% to Rs 820.60 per kg in 416 lots.

Market analysts said the rise in cardamom futures was mostly supported by fresh positions created by speculators on the back of a firming trend at spot market on strong demand.