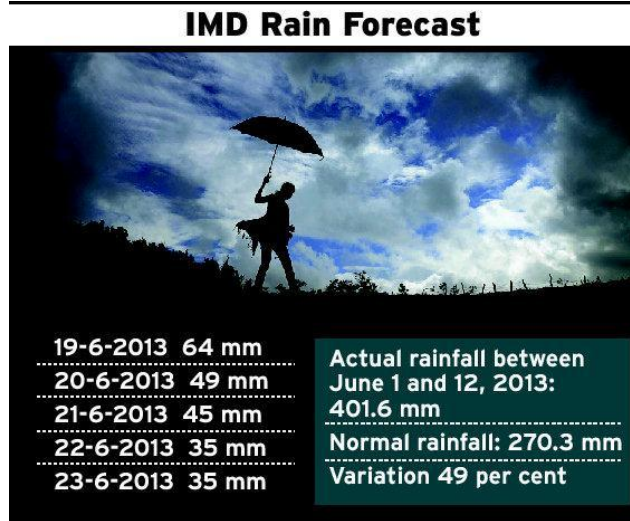


Drip, drip hurray! Early rain cheers up paddy cultivators



The prospects of paddy cultivation in Ernakulam are looking up this *Virippu* season (first crop) with the earlier than expected onset of the monsoon. If everything goes right, area under paddy in Ernakulam during the season is expected to easily exceed last year's spread of 1,873 hectares, say figures from the department of agriculture.

"Of a total of 3,000 hectares available for paddy cultivation in the district, 1,200 hectares have already been sown," said a senior department official here on Tuesday. The official said the recent peak recorded in the district was during the 2011 summer when a total of 2,600 hectares came under paddy.

In areas like Kunnukara, Edakkattuvayal, Amballoor and Koovappady sowing operations are complete or are in advanced stage. But it has been held up in places like Rayamangalam, Mulamthuruthy and Piravom mostly because of water logging.

In Kunnukara, around 78 hectares have come under the summer paddy crop. The farmers have been traditionally using the Uma variety of red rice and the yields have

been good around 5.5 tonnes a hectare. However, the intensity of the rains this season has raised some fears that rising water levels in the fields may affect productivity.

The Indian Meteorological Department predicted on Tuesday that the district would get between 64 mm and 35 mm of rain over the next five days. Figures from the IMD also show that the district has received copious rains, in excess of the normal rainfall. The actual rainfall between June 1 and 12 has been 401.6 mm against the normal 270.3 mm in the district.

A department official said the expanded dry weather during April-May held up dry sowing but picked up momentum in the first week of June itself.

Unlike in Pokkali, the *Virippu* season has not been hit by any shortage of seeds. Uma and Jyoti varieties are the favourites during the first crop and the seeds have been sourced from Kerala State Seed Development Authority.

Which is costlier, the chicken or the egg?



As if the consistently high prices of vegetables and fuel were not bad enough, the sudden increase in the prices of chicken and eggs has been a blow to customers.

Many residents, who visited meat shops on Monday, were in for a shock as the price of one kg of chicken had increased by Rs. 60 in the last three days.

See infographic at left.

Some of them said they bought only half of what they usually buy. “Whenever the vegetable prices go up, I manage with chicken or eggs. But, now even these have become costly and I had to cut down on portions of non-vegetarian items,” said N. Srinivasan, a resident of Choolai.

One kg of dressed chicken is now sold at Rs. 200-Rs.220 depending on the locality. The low poultry productivity in Namakkal belt owing to the heat has been cited as the reason for the escalating cost. The soaring cost of poultry feed is another reason, said traders.

“This has affected sales. Many customers have been buying only half the quantity,” said V.Anandan, a retailer in Anna Nagar.

Chicken traders strike

Wholesale chicken traders went on strike during the weekend at being forced to buy chicken at Rs. 120 per kg. Shabeer Ahamed, president of Chennai Meat Traders Association, said: “We get only 5 lakh hens daily, a decrease of over 10 lakh. But, the demand remains the same,” he added.

However, caterers and hoteliers said they have not increased the price of non-vegetarian dishes or compromised on quantity. “Profits have come down by at least 30 per cent as prices of ingredients including chicken, eggs, tomatoes and ginger have gone up,” he added.

However, he has not cut down on the number of dishes, especially in wedding banquets, owing to fear of losing out to competition.

Eggs, which are a staple at many homes, have also become dearer. Mohan Reddy, the Chennai Zonal Chairman of National Egg Coordination Committee, which fixes the rate for eggs, said that summer had taken a toll on production.

“About 5 -7 per cent of farms reduced the number of birds and have not replaced them. But the major contributor to the increase in prices is the cost of feed. Last year, during the same period, feed was just Rs. 12 a kg but now it is Rs. 21/kg.

Drought, drop in maize production

A severe drought and drop in maize crop production has led to an increase in feed prices. However, though egg prices have gone up in the retail market, the farmers are getting only 20 paise per egg. Last month alone, the industry suffered losses amounting to Rs. 10 – 15 crore. Farmers suffered a loss of Re.1 per egg,” he said.

The cost of mutton continues to be static at Rs.440 per kg for the past six months as the meat is being sourced from as far as Maharashtra.

With fish prices being 10 – 15 per cent higher than they were during the 45-day ban on trawling, the hike in prices of eggs and chicken has hit many families badly.

“Fish are being sent to the western coast as the ban is in place there. Also, rains and winds in the sea down south have kept fisherfolk indoors.

Though demand for fish is high, fishing activity is limited to Chennai, Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram districts in the State,” said Nanjil Ravi of the Akila Indiya Meenavar Sangam.

‘Enormous growth potential for agricultural sector in India’

G. Chandrashekar, consultant, *The Hindu Business Line* , said that there was enormous scope for growth in the country’s agricultural sector, and if the potential was properly utilised the economic growth of the country could be substantially increased in the coming years.

Speaking at a seminar on ‘Agribusiness and commodities price risk management’, organised jointly by *The Hindu Business Line* , the Forward Markets Commission, the

National Commodities Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Bangalore, and the District Chamber of Commerce and Industry here on Monday, Mr. Chandrashekar said that although India was the highest producer of milk, and the second highest producer of wheat, rice, sugar, cotton and vegetables in the world, policy-makers had failed to link it with economic growth.

Besides, the per capita availability of these products was very low. Expressing concern over the failure to attain the expected economic development owing to population explosion and decrease in the export of commodities, he said that at present the country's population stood at 120 crore and another two crore would be added to it in the next two years.

Imports

There was a considerable increase in imports, but the quantity of exports was not increasing. Substantial reduction in investment was among the factors that had prevented the country from achieving the expected economic growth. Countries like China and the U.S. were exporting a large number of commodities and, thereby, they had achieved economic stability.

Foreign exchange

The foreign exchange reserves of China were eight times more than that of India. Our country had vast natural resources and manpower, apart from intellectual power. All these factors should be utilised properly to stay ahead of other countries, he said.

Population

More than 53 per cent of our population was below 25 years of age, and one-third of the population was below 15 years, he said and added that it was time that the huge youth force was utilised to achieve all-round development. Demand for housing would

continue to grow for at least the next 30 years. At present, the country was facing a shortage of five crore dwelling units, he said.

Global view

The Indian market was gradually integrating with the global market and, therefore, stakeholders needed to have a global view of the market. Because of price volatility, risk perception was high. Price discovery of a commodity, price risk management, insurance against adverse price variations and locks in profit margin were some of the crucial aspects that one needed know in the present global market scenario, he said.

Lending

B. Jayaram Reddy, Deputy General Manager, Canara Bank, in his address, said that the bank was giving priority to farm loans. He said that the bank was providing financial assistance to farmers for installation of pump sets, minor irrigation and lift irrigation, apart from dairying, piggery, sheep and goat rearing, duck rearing, beekeeping and setting up biogas plants, tissue culture, sericulture, farm mechanisation and commercial horticulture.

He appealed to farmers to make use of the facilities and attain economic stability, which would contribute to the country's progress indirectly.

T. Bhanu, veteran journalist, spoke.

After the seminar, Mr. Chandrashekar answered a volley of questions from the audience during an interactive session.

Decentralise fertilizer distribution process: Ministers

Minister of State for Medical Education Sharan Prakash Patil and Municipal Administration Minister Qamar-ul Islam directed the Karnataka Marketing Federation officials to decentralise the process of distribution and storage of fertilizer at godowns in

the taluk headquarters for easy off-loading by retailers and the Vyavasaya Seva Sahakara Sangha Niyamita (VSSNs).

Taking exception to the practice of off-loading fertilizer to the VSSNs and retail outlets centrally in its godowns in Gulbarga, Dr. Patil said storing the fertilizer at the taluk headquarters would help the VSSNs to easily off-load them.

Mr. Islam directed Agriculture Department officials to ensure supply of seeds of the farmers' choice and that no brand should be forced upon farmers. "The State government has issued directions in this regard to the Agriculture Department."

Agriculturists' grievances day

The Perambalur district agriculturists' grievances day would be conducted here on Thursday. According to a release from M.A. Subramanian, Collector (in charge), issues such as irrigation, loans for agriculture, agri inputs, agricultural implements, and the scheme for the welfare of farmers would be discussed at the meeting.

Efforts on to improve storage in Vaigai Dam

Power generation commences at Lower Camp



A view of Periyar dam in Kerala.— Photo:G. Karthikeyan

With continuous rainfall and good inflow into Periyar Dam, the Public Works engineers have stepped up discharge to 514 cusecs from mere 100 cusecs to improve the storage level in Vaigai Dam on Tuesday.

Power generation has also commenced simultaneously at TANGEDCO hydel power generation station at Lower Camp in Goodalur. Of the four turbines, one turbine has started functioning to produce power.

The first turbine produced 27 MW of power on the first day. Initially, water was being pumped through one of the four giant pipes from the dam. Each turbine has the capacity to carry 400 cusecs of water from the dam.

Capacity of each turbine was around 35 MW. Two years ago, the engineers had rectified snags in the two turbines and have kept it in running condition.

The PWD planned to step up discharge further not only to improve storage level in Vaigai Dam but also to keep the storage level in Periyar Dam below the permissible level of 136 feet. They do not want the inflow to drain in to Arabian sea.

Water level rose to 116.8 feet in Periyar Dam this morning with an inflow of 1,473 cusecs. The discharge was 514 cusecs.

But all efforts to improve storage in Vaigai Dam did not bring any desirable results. Water released from Periyar Dam has failed to reach Vaigai Dam till date. Water level stood at 30 feet only. Inflow slightly rose to 20 cusecs from 16 cusecs. Water was expected to reach Vaigai Dam tomorrow, PWD officials said.

But PWD authorities have not given assurance to the farmers regarding supply of water for irrigation of first crop in the double cropping areas of Cumbum valley or for raising nurseries.

Rs. 1.45 crore to encourage fodder cultivation in Erode

The district administration has received Rs. 1.45 crore from the State Government to increase fodder cultivation.

The sum would be spent through the Department of Animal Husbandry to encourage farmers to cultivate fodder crop and use modern techniques to enhance the yield significantly, officials said.

Though the district was having a cattle population of about 3.5 lakh, the cultivation of the fodder crop had come down in the district.

Millet to be promoted as 'nutrient-cereal' in Tirupur

In an attempt to promote millets as a 'nutrient-cereal' and increase its consumption among people, the Department of Agriculture is planning to augment its yield and also carry out promotional activities to generate demand at project cost of Rs, 64 lakh.

To encourage cultivation of the crop, kits containing inputs like seeds, plant protection materials, micro nutrient mixtures, bio-fertilisers, potash and bio-control agents will be distributed free to farmers spread over select-blocks of Avinashi, Kangayam, Palladam, Pongalur, Tirupur, Kundadam, Moolanur and Uthukuli.

The inputs will be given to meet the requirements only up to a maximum of two hectares per farmer.

"We are going to bring about 2,000 ha under the crop this season with focus on raising Sorghum variety of the millet. The millets are richer in nutrients than wheat and paddy," Joint Director of Agriculture Mohammed Kalimullah Sherif told *The Hindu* .

Demonstration plots

For dissemination of latest farm practices, demonstration plots will be set up widely across the selected blocks.

“Farmers will also be taken out on exposure visits to either Krishi Vigyan Kendras, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University or agriculture research stations so as to help them directly observe the cultivation and post-harvest techniques,” Mr. Sherif said.

Food ‘mela’

As part of promotional activities to increase the consumption of nutrient-rich millet, the agriculture department will be holding food melas to display value-added edible items that were made of millet varieties and also conduct seminars.

Poultry farmers wait for ban on export to go

According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) norms the ban on export of egg and chicken from India to countries that are members of the organisation should have come to an end on June 9. The ban came into effect on March 9, 2013, after a bird flu outbreak was reported in a farm in Madhubani, Bihar, in February.

A notification in this connection was sent by the Animal Husbandry Department (AHD), Government of India, to OIE in March – after confirming it in the Bhopal based High Security Animal Disease Laboratory – following which members of the organisation had imposed the ban on poultry products from India.

“The ban is usually imposed by countries for a period of 90 days after the AHD confirms a bird flu outbreak. But the ban that is now in effect been for more than seven months as the ban that was imposed on October 28 following an outbreak in a government-run turkey farm at Hesaraghatta, Karanataka, continued,” P.V. Senthil, secretary of the Livestock and Agriculture Farm Traders Association, said.

He said that the earlier ban should have been lifted on January 26, 2013, but it got delayed due to the delay by the AHD in notifying the OIE that the country was free from bird flu. “AHD authorities sent the notification to OIE on February 14, about three weeks later, after poultry bodies made repeated representations to authorities concerned in the State and Union Governments,” he added.

Poultry farmers were hopeful of getting the ban lifted and suffered another major blow when the outbreak was reported in Bihar. “Due to the delay in making a representation to the OIE and continuance of the ban, annual egg export from Namakkal (biggest export zone in India) was at its worst in the financial year 2012-13 in over a decade,” NECC sources said. Over the years the industry has witnessed a heavy drop in egg consumption during summer. “This is the 13th time a ban was imposed on export of poultry products from India in six years, citing outbreak of bird flu as the reason. Every time a ban is imposed exporters and farmers have been having a tough time to lift it by making repeated representations to the AHD officials,” members of farmers’ associations said.

Rooftop vegetable garden opened at district library in Palayamkottai

Effort to encourage public to set up kitchen gardens at home



Green Advantage: The demo terrace garden set up at the District Central Library in Palayamkottai.— Photo: A. SHAIKMOHIDEEN

In an effort to encourage the public to set up rooftop kitchen gardens at home, the Department of Horticulture has established a vegetable garden on the terrace of District Central Library near St.Xavier’s College, Palayamkottai.

The vegetable garden has a range of greens and vegetables, including beans, tomato, green chilly, brinjal, and ridge gourd, and a few flower varieties. The plants are watered by drip irrigation.

Open to public

The public can visit this terrace garden and get suggestions from officials on establishing similar ones at their houses.

Inaugurating the demo vegetable garden on Monday evening, District Collector C.Samayamoorthy said by adopting this model the people could get fresh vegetables from their own gardens every day when vegetable prices were soaring.

As the farmers used chemical fertilizers and pesticides to increase the production, it could adversely impact the health of the consumers, he also noted.

One time investment

The roof gardens that required an one-time investment of Rs.2,000 to Rs.4,000 could provide nutritious and fresh vegetables for long.

“Above all, the pleasure you draw from maintaining a garden and harvesting the vegetables from it would be just immeasurable,” said Mr.Samayamoorthy.

Mayor Vijila Sathyananth and officials from the Department of Horticulture participated.

Gutka banned, yet arecanut a profitable proposition

Undeterred by the ban on gutka and the fears that it would eventually lead to fall in areca prices has clearly not stopped farmers in Shimoga district from planting areca saplings. This is because they believe that the returns would still be more attractive compared to paddy, sugarcane and maize, the other important crops in the region.

After gutka was banned, Yogeshwarappa K.S. from Kommanal village has planted arecanut saplings in his 1.5 acres of land. He does not think that the ban on gutka will immediately hit the price of arecanut.

Mr. Yogeshwarappa's family already owns six acres of arecanut plantation. They used to grow food crops in the 1.5 acres of land. "As profit from cultivation of arecanut was much more compared to maize and paddy, we decided to plant it in the remaining 1.5 acres of land also," he said.

Says Rohith Kumar A.O., a farmer from Antaragange village near Bhadravathi, "After deducting the expense towards inputs and labour, the arecanut grower will get profit of Rs. 70,000 to Rs. 80,000 per acre. The profit from cultivating paddy in an acre of land in contrast will not be more than Rs. 20,000," he said.

The problem of shortage of labour was another reason why farmers in Malnad have opted for arecanut.

Mr. Rohith says that the work of providing fertilizer, de-weeding and harvesting that require labour should be undertaken at a proper time for paddy, maize and sugarcane. Those who cultivate arecanut can postpone this work for 15 to 20 days if workers are not available, he said. The last decade saw a sudden surge in the prices of areca owing largely to the impact of gutka. The price per acre of arecanut that was around Rs. 1,800 per quintal in 1988 surged to Rs. 20,000 a quintal in 1996.

Though there was a small decline in the price for the next few years, it again crossed the Rs. 20,000 mark in the year 2000.

Machinery distributed to small farmers



A programme on agricultural mechanisation for small and marginal farmers, funded by the Union government's tribal sub-plan, was organised at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) Complex for Goa, on Tuesday.

Under the programme led by Mathala Juliet Gupta, scientist (Agricultural Engineering), ICAR, agricultural machinery worth Rs. 20 lakh was distributed to 75 farmers belonging to the Nuvem Scheduled Tribe Farmers Association, Cupem, Salcete, and 21 farmers belonging to the Baida Xhetkarancho Ekvott, Baida ward, Nuvem, and the Duguem Farmers Group, Duguem.

Paddy threshers and winnowing fans were distributed to seven groups from Geodongrem, Canacona, in the presence of Francisco Sardinha, south Goa MP. Director of ICAR, Goa, Narendra Pratap Singh spoke about the areas in which the institution was striving to serve farmers of Goa. He urged the farmers to adopt high-yielding varieties of different crops.

Irate Bengal gram growers agitate for support price

The functioning of revenue offices was affected in 12 mandals as Bengal gram growers cutting across party lines laid siege to the offices of Tehsildars demanding market intervention by Central and State government agencies.

Ongole police took into preventive custody Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangam State Vice-President N. Ranga Rao and 14 other leaders as ryots blocked entry into the MRO office here urging the Centre to immediately impose anti-dumping duties to stop import of Bengal gram from Australia and other countries at a throw-away price. Telugu Desam Party ryots wing State President Karnam Balaramakrishnamurthy leading the farmers protest in Nagulapupadu pressed for immediate intervention by the NAFED and MARKFED to ensure a remunerative price of Rs. 6,000 per quintal for KAK2 and Rs. 7,000 per quintal for Mexican bold variety. Those taken into custody in Ongole included District Secretary D. Gopinath, CPI-led APRS District President K.V.V.Prasad, YSR Congress Farmers wing District President Mareddy Subba Reddy.

Describing the first phase of the stir a “success”, Mr. Subba Reddy said “we will sit together in the next few days to decide on the next phase of agitation”. Hundreds of ryots disrupted the functioning of the MRO offices in Kondepi, Jarugumalli, Tangtur, Inkollu, Madipadu, Chinnaganjam, Karamchedu and Parchur.

Delta farmers continue opposition to coal-bed methane project

Protests staged at various places in delta districts



Defending Mother Earth:Members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam staging a protest demonstration in Vedaranyam against methane extraction.

Cadres of the CPI-affiliated Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam took out rallies and staged demonstrations at various places in Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts protesting against the proposed coal-bed methane (CBM) project from the delta districts.

Groundwater depletion and pollution is inevitable when methane is extracted.

The State had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Great Eastern Energy Corporation Ltd (GEECL) for extracting methane in 2011.

The cadres said GAIL and the Indian Oil Corporation had been laying pipelines to transport oil and gas to Tiruchi from the coastal and delta region, damaging cultivable lands.

The companies should pay hefty compensation to farmers whose lands had been damaged.

At Thanjavur, P. Balasundaram, Thanjavur District President of the sangam, led the agitation in front of the Head Post Office.

R. Thirugnanam, District secretary of CPI and hundreds of cadres of the sangam, took part in the agitation. Similar demonstrations were held at Orathanadu where Durai Manickam, State general secretary of the sangam, led the agitation. Protests were also staged at Pattukottai, Peravurani, Kumbakonam, Papanasam, Thiruvudaimaruthur, Thiruvonam, Madukkur, and Ammapettai.

In Tiruvarur district, protests were staged demonstration in front of the tahsildar office urging the Centre and the State government to drop the project.

P.S. Masilamani, Tiruvarur district secretary of the sangam, led the agitation. At Thiruthuraiipoondi, K. Ualaganathan, MLA, led a procession from PSR Marriage Hall to tahsildar office and staged a demonstration.

At Mannargudi, R. Veeramani of the sangam led the a procession from the municipal office and staged a demonstration in front of the Revenue Divisional Office.

V. Selvaraj, district assistant secretary of CPI, took part in the agitation.

At Kottur, P.R. Pandian, district assistant secretary of the sangam, led the agitation. Nearly 250 cadres took part in the demonstration.

The sangam staged protest demonstrations in various blocks across the Nagapattinam district against the proposed coal-bed methane project on Tuesday.

Leading the protests in Vedaranyam, Samandam, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said the State government should intervene and prevent any such move to exploration. They say the project would decimate agriculture, livelihoods, and food security in the fertile delta region.

According to Mr. Sambandam, the permit for exploration was given by the Centre, of which the DMK was a member of the United Progress Alliance and was in power in the State.

Alleging that the permit was granted in a clandestine manner with the GEECL aiming at petroleum exploration licence, the farmer's wing of the CPI appealed to the State government to drop the proposal.

Protests were held in all blocks except Sirkazhi, where protests are scheduled for June 20.

The exploration, besides destroying farmlands, would increase the water salinity. The impact would not be confined to Mannargudi, but would be felt across the delta districts reaching up to Cuddalore.

Tackle millipede pest attack, farmers told

Farm scientists have advised farmers to tackle the millipede pest attack on soya crop.

The pest attack has been noticed in some taluks.

The millipede takes shelter in cool, wet places in the field and when curled up is the size of a Re. 1 coin. The millipede feeds on new sprouts and can cause serious damage to

the crop. It can be tackled by throwing out all waste material that can hold water or cause dampness.

Pests should be picked up early in the morning and burnt in a heap.

Hens should be allowed to roam around in the field so that they feed on these pests, said a release from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

Leave choice of fertilizer to farmers: Minister

Shamanur Shivashankarappa, Minister in charge of the district, on Tuesday instructed Joint Director of Agriculture R.G. Gollar to ensure that the choice of fertilizer was left to farmers and traders did not interfere in the matter of selection. He asked Mr. Gollar to direct all fertilizer dealers not to force farmers to buy a particular combination.

Presiding over the tri-monthly Karnataka Development Programme review meeting here, Mr. Shivashankarappa said that he had information that in other districts dealers were supplying fertilizers that farmers wanted.

He asked Mr. Gollar to warn fertilizer dealers of stern action if they forced farmers to buy a particular fertilizer.

Earlier, Vadnal Rajanna, Chennagiri MLA, had alleged that dealers in the district were asking farmers to buy potash when they wanted to buy DAP. A few farmers who had purchased potash on the insistence of dealers had kept it in their houses unused. Many farmers in Chennagiri and Honnali had gone to Shimoga to buy fertilizers, he said.

Mr. Gollar said that mixed variety of fertilizer was needed for integrated nutrition management and restoration of soil quality and, therefore, the dealers might have asked the farmers to buy different kinds of fertilizer like potash. Mr. Shivashankarappa said that farmers were aware of their requirement and they should be allowed to purchase the fertilizer of their choice.

Many legislators, including H.S. Shivashankar, Rajanna, D.G. Shanthana Gowda and M.P. Ravindra, urged Mr. Gollar to extend the deadline for seed distribution as a majority of farmers who were going in for late sowing needed seeds. Mr. Shivashankarappa also instructed Mr. Gollar to continue supply of seeds at subsidised rates for one more week.

Executive Engineer of the engineering division in zilla panchayat said that there were 798 villages and 1,334 habitations in the 230 gram panchayats of the district. Of the over 4,540 water bodies in the district, 2,050 had potable water and 759 were chemically affected and unfit for human consumption. More than 33 multi-village schemes had been taken up so far to provide potable water to villages where the available water sources were chemically affected.

S.S. Mallikarjun, MLA and former Minister, asked chief executive officer of zilla panchayat A.B. Hemachandra to get a master plan prepared for providing potable water to all villages from nearby sources and promised that he would get grants released from the government.

Later, Mr. Mallikarjun asked district health officer Sumitra Devi to ensure that none of the primary health centres functioned without a doctor.

He also asked her to appoint doctors on contract wherever needed. He said that he had received a number of complaints of doctors being absent in primary health centres and directed her to address the problem immediately. It was resolved at the meeting to send a proposal to the government to include non-officials in surveillance committees that had been set up to oversee sand extraction and transportation from Tungabhadra river in the district.

Continued display of name-boards of previous legislators and Ministers on public buildings, schools and anganawadi centres figured in the meeting and the MLAs insisted that such boards be removed immediately.

Mr. Shivashankar said that it was unfair on the part of former legislators to keep their name-boards on buildings constructed with development funds of MPs and MLAs. All such funds were released by the government and therefore legislators' names should not be displayed on buildings, he said. After a prolonged discussion, Deputy Commissioner S.S. Pattanashetty said that he would examine the guidelines and then take an appropriate decision in the matter.

Timely monsoon cheers farmers

For about a decade, farmers have not experienced 'luxury' of things going their way



A happy lot: Farm operations pick up with timely onset of monsoon in Adilabad district.–

Photo: S. Harpal Singh

The monsoon has arrived on time and rainfall is more than adequate to spur agriculture operations. There aren't many hitches in the purchase of different varieties of seeds in the market and a steady supply of fertilizer is expected in the coming weeks.

The smile on the faces of farmers says everything is going in their favour right from the beginning of the season, a condition experienced after a long gap.

Caught off guard

The quantum of rainfall received in the last 4 days has actually caught many a farmer in the district off guard. Going by past experience, they were lax in making preparations for kharif, which can cost them a delay of a few days.

For about a decade now, farmers have not experienced the 'luxury' of things going their way. Their problems used to begin even as kharif operations would get under way.

"Supply of seeds, especially of Bt cotton and soyabean, was never constant in the last 10 years or so.

The struggle to purchase seeds seemed an inescapable part of our lives until this season," recalls Pabba Venkati, a cotton farmer from Hashampur in Jainad mandal.

Rainfall during the months of June and July were erratic in the past and were interspersed with long dry spells which resulted in the loss of seeds.

"The current rainfall will ensure excellent germination and farmers will be spared the agony of purchasing additional quantity of seeds as a replacement for lost seeds," Mr. Venkati asserts.

In July-August, the middle of the kharif season, farmers used to be a worried lot owing to weeds.

This is one aspect which they cannot do away with even this year as good rains aid the growth of unwanted plants also.

The last but most important aspect of agriculture which continuously dogged the farming community for the last few years is the price of the produce, be it cotton or any other crop.

Given the present scenario, farmers hope that the price of cotton, soya bean and food grains will either witness a hike during the course and/or the expected improved yields will take care of any loss on account of unremunerative prices.

Heavy damage to crops, property in Kasaragod



Several low-lying areas were inundated in heavy rain in the district. Major rivers have swollen and families residing by the beach face evacuation.

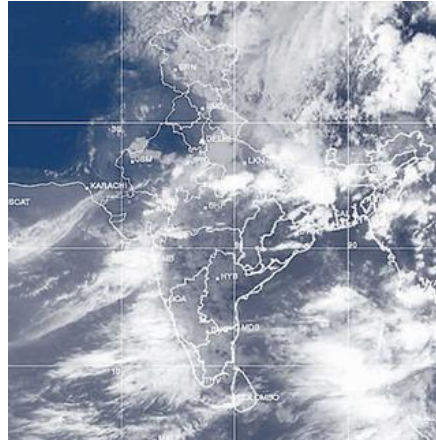
According to official sources, the district recorded 146.80 mm rain in the last 24 hours. A house at Kottakkandam in Bedadukka village was destroyed while 15 houses in the district were damaged. Officials estimate the loss to property at Rs.2.13 lakh.

Floodwater in temple

Water from the Madhuahi river entered the Siddhi Vinayaka Madanandeshwaram temple at Madhur. A tree fell on the national highway at Bevinja on the Thekkil ghat section, disrupting traffic.

Crops were destroyed across the district, especially in the hilly hamlets around Kanhangad as the water level of a tributary of the Chandragiri river suddenly went up. Sea continued to be turbulent for the second day on Tuesday. There was sea erosion too in many places.

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	31	25	24	154
New Delhi (Sfd)	30	23	17	108
Chandigarh	31	23	0	185
Hissar	32	23	0	101
Bhuntar	31	16	7	115
Shimla	23	13	6	152
Jammu	34	21	1	28
Srinagar	24	13	5	32
Amritsar	35	20	9	131
Patiala	31	24	0	117
Jaipur	37	25	21	82
Udaipur	33	25	11	54
Allahabad	36	27	5	51
Lucknow	30	22	54	164
Varanasi	38	27	15	32
Dehradun	22	20	12	635
Agartala	37	27	0	91

Ahmedabad	30	26	1	103
Bangalore	27	20	1	123
Bhubaneshwar	36	26	0	105
Bhopal	27	24	20	140
Chennai	39	28	0	123
Guwahati	37	26	0	69
Hyderabad	33	24	0	153
Kolkata	36	28	tr	142
Mumbai	28	25	39	788
Nagpur	34	23	5	171
Patna	36	28	2	42
Pune	27	22	2	208
Thiruvananthapuram	26	23	19	255
Imphal	34	24	0	29
Shillong	25	19	1	126

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 vigorous in Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The axis of Monsoon trough passes through Anupgarh, Churu, Mathura, Mainpuri, Pratapgarh, Jaunpur and thense east wards.

RAINFALL: Rain/thundershowers have occurred at most places over Himachal Pradesh, east Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, at many places over Jammu and Kashmir and west Uttar Pradesh, at a few places over west Rajasthan and at isolated

places over rest of the region. The chief amounts of rainfall in cm are: (5 cm and above)
HIMACHAL PRADESH: Kalpa 7, Sangrah 6 and Renuka 5, EAST RAJASTHAN:
Reodar 9, Chittorgarh and Nainwa 6 each and Mandalgarh, Sikrai, Bamanwas and
Vallabhngar 5 each, WEST RAJASTHAN: Shiv 8, Raniwara 7 and barmer and
Jaswantpur 5 each, EAST UTTAR PRADESH: Bansi 21, Palliakalan 16, Kakhari 15,
Kisanganj 13, Elginbridge and Gorakhpur 11 each, Ayoadhya, Katernighat and Purwa
10 each, Basti, Bhinga and Gonda 9 each, Barabanki, Dhaurahara , Birdghat and
Fatehpur 8 each, Bahraich and Fursatganj 7 each, Bani, Hata, Kunda 6 each and
Sultanpur , Lucknow and Regoli 5 each, WEST UTTAR PRADESH: Nigana 12,
Moradabad 9, Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar 7 each, Deoband and Kalpi and Bijnor 6
each and Nazibabad 5 each and UTTARAKHAND: Haldwani 28, Champawat 22,
Mukteshwar 18. Nanital 17, Ranikhet and Pithoragarh 12 each, Pantnagar 11, Almora
and Chamoli 10 each, Kosani, Joshimath and Tharali 8 each, Devprayag and
Keertinagar 7 each, Bageshwar and Rudraprayag 6 each and Tehri 5.

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 20th June 2013: Rain/thundershowers may occur at many places over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and east Rajasthan during next 24 hours and decrease thereafter. Rain/thundershowers may occur at few places over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh during next 24 hours and decrease thereafter and at one or two places over rest of the region. **WARNING:** Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over Uttarakhand and east Rajasthan during next 24 hours.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 20th June 2013: Partly cloudy sky. Light rain would occur in some areas.

THE HINDU Business Line

'Speed up pepper adulteration probe'

The Madhya Pradesh-based Kalimirch Vyaapari Association has urged the Commissioner of Food Safety, Kerala to expedite its investigation into adulteration of pepper at warehouses of the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange in Kerala and submit its report soon.

In a letter addressed to Biju Prabhakar, Commissioner of Food Safety, Kerala, the Association highlighted the delay of over five months in testing black pepper sealed at NCDEX-authorized warehouses for traces of mineral oil. The 6,800 tonnes of pepper locked up at the warehouse is valued at Rs 300 crore.

In December, the Food Safety Authority sealed the spice after there were complaints of mineral oil in pepper delivered at the warehouse. The Authority appointed the Spices Board to conduct the test on entire stock of 6,800 tonnes, rather than taking random sample. It is reliably learnt that the Board has already submitted a report to the authority after testing 1,000 tonnes of pepper lying at the warehouse.

"We would like to draw your attention... in the whole issue which is grave and has crucial impact on the financial health of the members of KVA. The members are undergoing grave mental harassment and anxiety in view of the delay (in investigation)," said Pradeep Acharya, Vice-President of the association.

Through this communication, the association members request for submission of the report (of Spice Board) which is required to be submitted statutorily to initiate appropriate action by the KVA member, he said.

Earlier, the Association has filed a writ petition in the Madhya Pradesh High Court against the NCDEX, National Securities Depository, Central Depository Service and

Ministry of Consumer Affairs for defaulting on pepper delivery for contracts which expired on January 5.

Highest tea garden: Korakundah set to break own record

Korakundah Tea Estate, some 60 km from Coonoor, belonging to United Nilgiri Tea Estates Co Ltd, (UNITEA) a member of Chennai-based Amalgamations group, is all set to break its own record of having planted tea at India's highest elevation.

A few years ago, it gained entry in Limca Book of National Records as the 'highest tea garden in the country' with tea planted at 7,920 ft above mean sea level.

"We have now gone higher to have planted tea at 8,060 feet. Accordingly, we are working on getting a new entry in Limca Records," Korakundah Manager Ajit Mathews told *Business Line*.

It has planted tea amidst thick forests at a height normally regarded unreachable, let alone cultivable.

The Elite World Records has certified Korakundah as 'the first identified highest organic tea garden in the world'. "This throws up enough evidence for our seeking an entry in Guinness Book of Record as well. Korakundah is totally organic. Although we have 925 hectares, we have planted tea only in 275 hectares leaving undisturbed over 100 hectares as virgin shola . Substantial area is retained as unpolluted grassland and water-body", UNITEA Director D. Hegde said.

To get organic manure, Korakundah Estate has developed its own self-sufficient input unit. The estate has 180 cows and the cow-dung is used in its vermi-compost unit. No chemical-based input is used. The estate is surrounded entirely by reserve forests and national parks of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve.

The factory also has Rainforest Alliance certification, Ethical Tea partnership certification and Fairtrade certification.

Weak demand, rains hit chana

Weak demand from the millers and decline in arrivals on account of rains in various parts of the State have dragged chana prices in local mandis to Rs 3,150-75 a quintal, while chana (desi) ruled at Rs 3,000; chana (mausmi) Rs 3,200-3,300; chana (vishal) Rs 2,700-2,800; chana (annagiri) Rs 3,000-3,200; Kabuli Bitki Rs 2,700-2,800, while Kaktu also ruled at Rs 2,700-2,800.

Though local mandis remained closed on Tuesday on account of Mahesh Jayanti, in private trading, chana (kanta) ruled stable at Rs 3,150-75.

Decline in spot chana also dragged its dal with chana dal (average) was quoted at Rs 3,700-25. Chana dal (medium) at Rs 3,875-3,900 and chana dal (bold) at Rs 4,050-75, however, remained unchanged.

Dollar chana ruled at Rs 3,700-4,400 in Madhya Dollar chana in container has gone up by Rs 150; dollar chana (42/44 count) Rs 5,400; 46/48 count Rs 4,975 and 58/60 count ruled at Rs 3,675.

Mixed trend in spot rubber

Spot rubber showed a mixed mood on Tuesday.

Declines in the domestic and international futures and the absence of genuine buyers kept sheet rubber under pressure during the day.

The grade finished unchanged at Rs 175.50 a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. Meanwhile, latex improved on comparatively better demand amidst low supply.

July futures dropped to Rs 172.90 (Rs 174.04), August to Rs 169.80 (Rs 171.34), September to Rs 166.70 (Rs 168.11), and October to Rs 164.40 (Rs 165) while the November contracts improved to Rs 163.95 (Rs 161.95) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs 161.51 (Rs 162.94) at Bangkok.

June futures declined to ¥ 230 (Rs 141.70) from ¥ 234.7 on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates Rs/kg : RSS-4: 175.50 (175.50); RSS-5: 170.50 (170.50); Ungraded: 160.50 (160.50); ISNR 20: 162 (162) and Latex 60 per cent: 117 (115).

Rice bran oil gaining acceptance as cooking oil

Production of rice bran oil (RBO) holds immense potential in India considering the surge in paddy production at 150 million tonnes over the last 10 years.

According to The Solvent Extractors Association of India, the rice bran oil production in the country is currently at 9 lakh tonnes (lt) against the potential of 14.6 lt. There is an untapped potential of 5.6 lt.

Japan, Thailand, China, South Korea are amongst the leading countries producing rice bran oil.

B.V. Mehta, Executive Director, SEAI, told *Business Line* that increased production of rice bran oil would help bridge the shortage of edible oils in India when its full potential of 14-15 lt is exploited.

India, he said, imports about 100 lt of edible oil worth Rs 55,000 crore a year to bridge the gap between demand and supply of edible oils. With full exploitation of rice bran oil, the country could reduce its edible import bills by about Rs 3,000 crore a year.

Besides, the RBO production will give better realisation for paddy to the farmers. Rice bran is an oily layer in between the paddy husk and the white rice.

Various research studies have proved that this oil is good for health and protect the consumer from the danger of coronary heart diseases, diabetes and cancer and good for overall health, he added.

According to Mehta, India produces the best quality of rice bran oil and has emerged as the largest producer of this cooking oil. This has been attained following the efforts taken by the Association to encourage its use among the health-conscious consumers.

The SEAI had taken a six member delegation to Japan to study the latest technology in RBO processing.

With all these efforts, he said many RBO and blended RBO brands entered the market in the last few years and today India started producing the best quality of rice bran oil.

Until recent past, RBO produced in India was mainly used for soap manufacturing and production mix of vanaspati manufacturing. It was through the awareness programme of SEAI that this edible oil has become popular and accepted as health cooking oil, he said.

Govt may sell 10 mt wheat from Central pool

Sale to cap rising domestic prices



Up for grabs: The move comes after the Government received a poor response to its recent offer of five million tonnes for exports through private players.

New Delhi, June 18:

The Government proposes to offload about 10 million tonnes (mt) of wheat from the Central pool stocks in Punjab to domestic bulk buyers and exporters. This open market sale could help the Government control rising domestic prices on the lower-than-expected crop.

The Food Ministry has moved a proposal that may come up before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs soon. Of the 10 mt, about 8.5 mt would be earmarked for domestic bulk buyers under the open market sale scheme (OMSS) at a likely price of around Rs 15,000 a tonne, official sources said.

Private exporters will also be allowed to access this OMSS wheat for shipments. “We are planning to do away with the ban on exports for wheat sold under the OMSS,” the official said.

The proposed move comes after the Government received a poor response to its recent offer of five million tonnes for exports through private players, as the price fixed was considered higher than global prices.

Offloading pattern

The Government also plans to offer about one million tonnes to smaller domestic consumers, four lakh tonnes to State Governments and another one lakh tonne to co-operatives.

Besides , it proposes to release 5 mt for the public distribution system (PDS) sales to poor families. The financial burden of PDS sales is expected to be around Rs 9,471 crore.

Also, the Government plans to export another 2 million tonnes through State-owned trading entities such as PEC, MMTC and STC. So far, these entities have contracted about 4.2 million tonnes for exports and have shipped out about 3.9 million tonnes. The average realisation of these entities has stood at \$316 a tonne.

millers

Even as the Government proposes to offload wheat from Punjab, the millers have urged that they be allowed to lift the stocks from any depot of their choice. “We have written to the Food Minister in this regard and expect to meet him soon,” said Adi Narayan Gupta,

President of Roller Flour Millers Federation of India. Such a move is expected to provide the millers quick access to stocks across the country.

Wheat prices have risen by about Rs 150 a quintal in recent months on lower-than-expected crop and farmers holding back their produce in anticipation of better prices in the year ahead. The Government agencies have so far procured about 25.08 mt of wheat, about 32 per cent lower than corresponding last year, as the procurement season has almost come to an end.

Weak La Nina condition could favour monsoon

Japanese scientists have clarified that differential impacts of a negative Indian Ocean Dipole are at play as a rampant monsoon pulse runs its course over the landmass.

Negative Indian Ocean Dipole results from excessive heating of South-East Indian Ocean relative the West, and was feared to interfere with the monsoon this year.

DIFFERENTIAL IMPACT

From past events, we find that this anomaly has a differential impact on the Western and Eastern halves of the country, said Swadhin Behera, team leader, Climate Variation Predictability and Applicability Research Programme at Research Institute for Global Change, Tokyo. The Western half, particularly coastal Maharashtra and Mumbai, usually gets above normal rainfall during negative dipole events.

Delhi and some of the Northern States also enjoy good rains on seasonal average.

“There is no statistical relationship established yet but it appears that the negative dipole does not affect monsoon disturbances and the trough on the Western Coast,” Behera wrote to *Business Line*.

In addition, a weak La Nina condition in the tropical Pacific is also favourable for the monsoon, he said.

EASTERN HALF

The Eastern half, particularly North-Eastern States and parts of West Bengal, does suffer from below normal rainfall during negative dipole phases.

One could see these patterns in the accumulated rainfall anomaly maps for last two weeks put on the India Met department Web site.

“The country as a whole may not show a severe negative impact at the end of the season (as in last year) and rainfall may be in normal range, which is what Met Department predictions suggest,” he added.

SEASONAL DISTRIBUTION

“However, because of the spatial differences/non-linearity in its impacts, I expect the seasonal distribution of the rainfall would be erratic in both periodicity and intensity of wet and dry spells,” he added. This would mean that excessive wet phases during the monsoon would be matched by drier spells.

Meanwhile, a former Director-General of Met Department told *Business Line* that a passing western disturbance interacted with moist easterlies from the Bay of Bengal to push monsoon rapidly into North and North-West India.

SHIFTING EAST

The interaction caused extremely heavy rainfall for two days over Himachal Pradesh and the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, leading to floods, loss of lives and property.

The effect of western disturbance over Western Himalayas would get over by Wednesday as the system shifts to the East. So rainfall will decrease over North-West India during the week, the former official said.

Onset phase has been active this year resulting in above normal so far specially over North-West and central India because of early advance/onset followed by good spell of rain.

The rain belt is now expected to shift to East and North-East where monsoon has been slightly below normal so far. Increase in rainfall over North-East India will result in well-distributed June rainfall over entire country.

Monsoon is expected to exhibit intra seasonal variability by entering in to relatively weak phase by weekend.

Edible oils heat up on supply woes

Edible oils prices edged higher on Tuesday expectation of higher demand ahead of Ramadan next month.

The rupee's decline against the dollar making imports costly and fears supply disruption and problems of quality due to heavy rain in producing centres lent support to the buying sentiment. Soyabean arrivals were 64,000-65,000 bags at Rs 3,880 ex-mandi and Rs 3,980 for plant delivery. Mustard seeds arrivals were 1.65 lakh-1.70 lakh bags at Rs 3,180-3,600. Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 546 for June 15, super palmolein Rs 582; super deluxe Rs 602 for June-July; Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 550; soyabean refined oil Rs 677 for June-July; Rs 680 for August; sunflower refined oil at Rs 795 for June-July; Gokul quoted palmolein at Rs 535 for weekly delivery. In Rajkot, groundnut oil increased by Rs 25 to Rs 1,550 (Rs 1,525) for *telia* tin and by Rs 10 to Rs 1,000 (Rs 990) for loose 10 kg.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean ref oil July futures were higher by Rs 4.10 to Rs 704.40 (Rs 700.30), August up by Rs 5.85 to Rs 696.00 (Rs 690.15) and September by Rs 3.90 to Rs 684.75 (Rs.680.85).

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil July contracts closed higher by MYR 2,463 (MYR 2,459), August to MYR 2,472 (MYR 2,467) and September to MYR 2,466 (MYR 2,462) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: Groundnut oil 1,000 (1,000), soya ref oil 672 (670), sunflower exp. ref. 735 (730), sunflower ref. 795 (790), rapeseed ref. oil 695 (695), rapeseed exp. ref. 665 (665) cottonseed ref. oil 667 (665) and palmolein 532 (526).

Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai, quoted Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 585 ex-Chennai for delivery in 15 days.

Demand unlikely to emerge for groundnut oil

Groundnut oil traded lower in Rajkot on lack of demand and higher selling interest.

Buyers were reluctant to make fresh purchases due to persistent downtrend.

According to market sources, groundnut oil prices may decline further as demand is unlikely to emerge for now.

On the other hand, cotton oil moved up marginally as demand improved.

Groundnut oil loose was traded lower by Rs 30 at Rs 955-960 for 10 kg, *teliya* tin decreased by Rs 46 to Rs 1,474-1,475 for 15 kg while groundnut oil new tin declined by Rs 15 to Rs 1,740-1,745.

About 1-2 tankers were traded in groundnut oil.

A Rajkot-based edible oil trader said that retail demand was poor and re-packers and brand manufacturers also were not so active in the market.

On the other hand, lack of export business in peanuts too pressurised the groundnut oil prices as it has increased availability of groundnut for crushing.

Groundnut arrivals were reported at 2,500 bags from Rajkot, 8,000 bags from Gondal and 960 bags from Jamnagar.

HPS Saurashtra origin bold 50-60 count was offered at Rs 72,000 a tonne and Rajasthan origin 50-60 count was offered at 75,000.

Cotton oil wash marginally gained by Rs 2 to Rs 637-640 for 10 kg while cotton oil new tin for 15 kg was traded higher by Rs 5 to Rs 1,115-1,125.

About 35-40 tankers were traded in cotton oil at Saurashtra.

Profit-booking drags sugar futures

Sugar prices ruled steady on Tuesday on routine demand while profit booking pulled down prices by Rs 5-7 a quintal on the domestic futures market.

Due to continuous rain in the city and middle month time, local demand remained need-based that kept prices in physical markets steady with minor changes. Moral was calm, said traders.

Sources said that in the Vashi wholesale market, S-grade improved by Rs 10 while M-grade lost by Rs 5 at higher end.

Naka and mill tender rates were steady, while in futures market, profit booking pulled down prices after rising Rs 38 in the last two days. Physical lifting remained lower than arrivals.

In the Vashi market, arrivals were 64-65 truckloads (each 100 bags) and local despatches 58-60 loads.

On Monday, 15-16 mills offered tenders and sold about 38,000-40,000 bags to local traders at Rs 2,950-3,010 (Rs 2,950-3,010) for S-grade and Rs 3,020-3,120 (Rs 3,020-3,120) for M-grade.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, sugar July contracts declined by Rs 5 to Rs 3,106 (Rs 3,111), August slipped by Rs 6 to Rs 3,158 (Rs 3,164) and September by Rs 7 to Rs 3,198 (Rs 3,205) till noon.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 3,080-3,141 (Rs 3,069- 3,131) and M-grade Rs 3,172-3,331 (Rs 3,172-3,336). *Naka delivery rates were:* S-grade Rs 3,020 -3,080 (Rs 3,020-3,080) and M-grade Rs 3,140-3,220 (Rs 3,140-3,220).

Wheat futures seen ruling range-bound

A range-bound movement is likely in wheat futures and spot market in the coming days, according to traders. Around 1,000 bags of wheat arrived on Tuesday and procurement was done by the private traders.

In the physical market, after witnessing a good rally last week, dara wheat ruled flat and sold at Rs 1,535-1,540 a quintal. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,535, while delivery at the chakki was Rs 1,540. Desi wheat variety sold at Rs 2,300.

Radhey Sham, a trade expert, told *Business Line* that restricted availability of stocks coupled with steady demand kept dara wheat and flour unchanged. Traders expect that market may continue to rule around current levels for the next few days and then, it may witness a marginal fall. In Delhi's Lawrence road market, a benchmark for the country, wheat mill quality traded at Rs 1,580-1,600.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for June contracts increased by Rs 8 and traded at Rs 1,594 with an open interest of 1,610 lots. The grain had made a low at Rs 1,584 earlier in the day.

July contracts went up by Rs 7 to Rs 1,596.

Wheat spot prices on the exchange went up by Rs 7.50 and traded at Rs 1,487.5.

Flour Prices

With a steady trend in wheat, flour too ruled flat and quoted at Rs 1,800. Similarly, Chokar continued to rule unchanged and sold at Rs 1,250-1,275.

Pepper may rule firm on tight supply

Pepper futures and spot markets continued to rise on demand amid tight supply.

Besides tight availability, heavy rain, floods and landslides in the high ranges have affected supply.

Only 10 tonnes were traded on the spot at Rs 344 a kg.

From the plains also, there were no arrivals on Tuesday. Upcountry buyers, who were buying low bulk density pepper from Karnataka, have turned towards Kerala. Domestic demand amid tight supply has aided the price rise in the futures market, they said.

According to market observers, prices might rule firmer in the coming days.

On the IPSTA, July contract increased by Rs 234 to Rs 36,435 a quintal. August and September contracts were up by Rs 234 each to Rs 36,373 and Rs 36,374, respectively.

Total open interest moved up by one tonne to 32 tonnes. Total turnover increased by seven tonnes to 46 tonnes.

Spot prices moved up by Rs 100 a quintal to Rs 34,400 (ungarbled) and Rs 35,900 (MG 1) on good demand amid limited supply.

Indian parity in the international market was \$6,450 a tonne (c&f) and remained in line with other origins.

Coconut oil surges to new high on corporate buying

Heavy corporate buying coupled with inclement weather in Kerala lifted coconut oil prices this week to a new high.

Prices touched Rs 70 a kg (Rs 66.50), whereas in Tamil Nadu it rose to Rs 68 (Rs 62). Copra prices also perked up to Rs 5,200 a quintal in Kerala (Rs 4,800), while it was ruling at Rs 5,000 (Rs 4,800) in Tamil Nadu.

According to Prakash B. Rao, Vice-President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association, copra and raw coconut arrivals declined drastically during these days. Normally, around 1,200 tonnes of copra arrive in major terminal markets in Tamil Nadu. This has dropped to 300-400 tonnes, mainly due to major corporate buying, he said.

Moreover, traders and farmers are refusing to liquidate their stocks in this bullish market, anticipating better prices in the coming days.

Rao hoped that the rates will stabilise at these levels for quite some time, as prices have shot up by Rs 1,000 a tonne in the last 6-7 trading sessions.

Due to the depreciation of the rupee, imported edible oils such as palm oil and palm kernel oil are now quoting at Rs 58 and Rs 56 respectively, he said.

However, Thalath Mahamood, former President, Cochin Oil Merchants Association, was of the view that “the market is witnessing an artificial boom with the lifting up of prices by some traders both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu”.

Expressing concern over the developments, he said “this is not a healthy trend and prices are likely to fluctuate”. Taking advantage of the situation, he said corporates have started buying copra in large quantities.

Endorsing the same view, Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member, COMA, said that there has been speculative buying that has lifted prices to a higher level.

He said that the loose price of 15 kg coconut oil that was ruling at Rs 860-levels in Kochi has shot up to Rs 1,020 within a span of 10 days.

Khona said that the market is likely to witness correction soon.

Naveen Patnaik gifts mobile phones to 5,000 farmers

BHUBANESWAR: Chief minister Naveen Patnaik on Tuesday distributed 5,000 mobile phones to farmers saying that the instrument would help them plan [farming](#), [track market price](#) of various agricultural produce and weather.

Officials said IIT-Kanpur had provided the multi-application technological support using which farmers can get the required information through voice call and SMS in local language. "Information will be obtained free and the recurring mobile call expenses, whatever, would be borne by the government for which arrangements are being made with BSNL, the service provider," said a senior government official. Each farmer will have to fill up a form to register with the regulated market committees stating the kind of information required. There are 66 regulated market committees (RMCs) in the state.

The government has planned to distribute 20,000 mobile phones in the first phase, each priced about Rs 1,000. The government has sanctioned Rs two crore for the project, described as 'digital bazar'.

"It is going to immensely benefit the farmers. They can be in touch with different mandis and know the prevailing rates of their produce," agriculture minister Debi Prasad Mishra said, adding such facility introduced in Haryana proved to be a boon for the farmers there.

Bad roads, inaccessible farm yields major hurdles in helping farmers

GUWAHATI: The state's potential in the horticulture sector is unable to flourish because of various hurdles.

S [Bhattacharjee](#), the managing director of North Eastern Regional Agricultural

Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC), which helps local [farmers](#) in selling their products so that they get adequate prices, said they were unable to help farmers actively as most of the crops cultivated in the remote pockets of the region are seasonal and that makes marketing of the farm products quite difficult. Bad road connectivity is another major problem and at times the [farm yields](#) are inaccessible. He also blamed the state government's indifference in allotting and sanctioning funds for various farmer-friendly projects.

Certain steps had been taken to address the problems, said Bhattacharjee, adding that a lot more were needed and acute funds crunch was restricting their efforts. Reportedly, there is absence of proper packaging industry to increase value addition of the products and also the cold storage facility in the region is inadequate.

On the issue of middlemen menace, the managing director said the corporation had taken stern steps to eliminate middlemen from the agriculture sector and they were actually successful in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh. NERAMAC fixed reserve price for the farmers there with the help of the respective state governments and funding from [North Eastern Council](#) (NEC). The process requires continuous funding for six to seven years, said Bhattacharjee.

'Bonus' lures away farmers from wheat purchase centres

KANPUR: Despite a bumper harvest, wheat purchase drive is yet to gain momentum in KanpurDehat. the district is one of the major wheat producers in the state. Usually farmers start arriving at wheat purchase centres in the last week of March or first week of April. The centres became operation on April 1 and would function till June 30. However, so far the centres in Dehat have purchased merely 5% of the fixed wheat purchase target.

Activities at these centres have been a dull affair so far, said one of the officer. "Only 2,681 MT of wheat has arrived at nearly 70 wheat purchase centres of the district. It is

quite low in comparison to last year's figure. Last year, we had procured nearly 19410 MT of wheat by this time," said district wheat procurement officer Ghanshyam.

"The government has set a target of 52,000 MT of wheat purchase in the ongoing season. However, the target is still far off. The state government has fixed Rs 1,350 per quintal as minimum support price. Last year it was Rs 1,280," he added.

A senior officer, on condition of anonymity, said that government had failed to woo farmers of the region. As a result, farmers are selling their produce in open market. Many have sold their produce in [Madhya Pradesh](#) and Rajasthan for better rates, he added.

His fear is not unfounded as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have announced a bonus of Rs 150 per quintal on wheat procurement for 2013-14 to woo farmers. The bonus is over and above the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs 1,350. Thus a farmer selling his produce in the two neighbouring states is receiving Rs 1,500 for every quintal of wheat.

Besides, the authorities have also failed to curb distress sale by farmers. Owing to poor arrangements and cumbersome procedure of selling produce at wheat purchase centres, most farmers sell wheat to middlemen at a rate lower than the minimum support price (MSP).

"Although the government has sanctioned funds for smooth procurement, district authorities have failed to make proper arrangements. For the last one week, I have been running to get my payment," said a farmer Sukh Sagar.

Farmers skipping the purchase centres would have a negative impact on the supply of wheat in the Public Distribution System.

Sources said that the Food Corporation of India has already placed orders with other states. Nearly three lakh MT wheat would be sent to the state every month to meet the requirement of PDS.

FCI purchases wheat from the state government, which is then redistributed for various PDS schemes in the state. This wheat is supplied at Rs 2 per kg to Antyodaya card holders, Rs 4.65 per kg to [BPL](#) card holders and Rs 6.60 per kg to [APL](#) card holders. The annual requirement of wheat for PDS is nearly 48 lakh MT in the state.

If only farmers knew better

Courtesy rising health concerns among consumers, the spurt in demand for organic food in the state has been meteoric over the last couple of years. But with the farmers not too eager to cope with the change, the supply chain has remained shaky as ever. Low yield and lack of knowledge have apparently kept the farmers away from organic farming, experts say. shirk

"Other than the tea estates, there is hardly any organic farm in the eastern region. The concept is yet to take off here. But of late, we have witnessed an increasing demand for organic food at retail stores," says Vikas Chadha, chief consultant of Satavic Farms. Chadha's firm trains and provides consultancy in organic farming. Reluctant

With proper monitoring and marketing, [organic farming](#) is not only financially viable but a profit-making venture as well. Natureway Agro Products, one of the suppliers to Spencer's, has its own farm where food is grown under strict supervision. "Growing organic stuff is difficult when it comes to maintaining the conditions laid out by the certification agencies. It takes time initially but things fall in place gradually," feels Haimanti Dhir, owner of Natureway.

"For example, when we are using cow dung to prepare compost, we have to ensure that the cow was fed with organic food. Otherwise its refuse might contain chemicals," she

adds. In order to insulate organic farms from being contaminated by harmful chemicals used in the neighbouring farms, long plants are used to screen them off.

For a few early birds in Bengal, a foray into organic food has not been a good business proposition. [Samadhan Agro](#), for example, had launched a range of organic food a few years back and had to wind up the operation soon. "Apart from rice, there wasn't any demand for other products. We couldn't run it then as it was becoming economically unviable," said Mrinmay Pramanik, managing director of Samadhan Agro.

"Lack of genuine interest among the farmers is one of the reasons why organic farming has not taken off in the eastern region. They found it unviable. Lack of market and awareness, poor networking and support from the government are the other weak points. States like Sikkim that support this form of agriculture has flourished in organic farming. We have large farmer groups working in south India as well," Chadha says.

Akansha's farm in Falta started growing organic vegetable around two years back and retailing farm produce barely a year ago. "By now we have around 750 clients who procure directly from us. Vegetable bags reach their doorsteps every morning," said Akansha owner RK Bhandari.

The entire process of organic farming starts from preparing compost. The process of composting requires making a heap of wetted organic matter (cow dung normally along with other elements like molasses and hyacinth) that is broken down into humus over a period of weeks. Apart from nourishing the plants, compost adds vital humus or humic acid to soil and also acts as a natural pesticide.

Bhandari thinks unlike the common myth, prices of organic food can be brought down significantly with economies of scale. "We sell organic potato and carrot at Rs 22.50 per kg, papaya at Rs 30 per kg and lal sag at Rs 15 per kg. Sweet corn is priced at Rs 80

per kg. The price difference ranges between 20% and 25% at the most," he said.

Farmers protest against Mandal-Bechraji Special Investment Region

GANDHINAGAR: More than 5,000 farmers along with [women](#) and children from 70 villages of proposed Mandal-Bechraji [Special Investment Region](#) (SIR) marched to Gandhinagar on Tuesday to oppose the state government's plan to take away their agricultural land to industrialize the region.

The protesters gathered adjacent of Pathika Ashram Ground in Gandhinagar and took a pledge not to hand over their land to anyone. Their leaders met revenue and urban development minister Anandiben Patel, but the talks failed as the farmers did not agree to the government's proposal.

The members of farmer delegation said that the minister told them that the government is firm on the SIR project and farmers will have to give 40 per cent of their land under the SIR development act.

Former [finance minister](#) and leading farmers' rights activist Sanat Mehta, who led the rally said, "States like Maharashtra and Haryana are acquiring land from farmers for SIRs through their consent, while here the [Gujarat government](#) is trying snatch away the farmers' land by force without paying a single rupee. The method of acquiring 40 per cent land compulsorily free of cost is illegal and we will oppose this law."

Former BJP MLA and social activist Dr Kanubhai Kalsaria while addressing the protestors said, "Being a doctor no one has the right to snatch my degree. Similarly, no one can take away the land of the farmers, which is their source of livelihood. You must not allow the proposed Maruti plant to come up on your land."

Veteran economist and former Union minister Y K Alagh was also among those

opposing the government move. He pointed, "The state government seems to be in a hurry to acquire the land of the farmers to avoid the Central move on land acquisition that calls for taking 80 per cent of land for a project through farmers' consent only. The state government cannot use a 150-year-old law to snatch the poor people's land. It is an illegal method."

Succour for crop loss in 15 days

BHAWANIPATRA: The state government is planning to provide compensation of at least Rs 6,000 per acre to farmers for [crop loss](#) they sustained during the rain fury and flash floods in certain parts of the state, panchayatiraj minister Kalpataru Das said here on Tuesday.

"We have decided to pay the amount on the basis of preliminary survey report. After assessing the total damage, the actual amount of compensation will be decided as per the relief code. The amount may go up when we get the final report," Das told reporters here.

Das and food supplies and consumer welfare minister Pratap Keshari Deb visited four villages in Kalampur block of Kalahandi district on Tuesday to assess the crop loss due to recent floods. The ministers interacted with farmers of worst-affected Matikhaal, Biripur, Gumakhal and Kalampur panchayats.

Das said the government has sought the final report of crop loss within seven days from the district administrations, which would be submitted to chief minister [Naveen Patnaik](#). The compensation would be announced within 15 days, he said. The government may announce a special package to farmers whose harvested paddy was damaged, lying in open mandis.

Deb said the government had targeted to procure 50 MT of paddy during rabi season in

Kalahandi. The government has already crossed the target and procured 55 MT. Since there is a bumper harvest, officials have been instructed to further increase the target by another 35,000 quintal as early as possible.

When asked about insufficient sheds in mandis, which caused heavy damage, Deb said, "It is impossible to build sheds in all mandis. We are planning to construct 50 sq metre of concrete floor with sheds in most of the mandis to prevent damage during rainfall."

Two days of torrential rain had flooded five blocks in Kalahandi district damaging 21,039.45 acre of farmland affecting 10,000 farmers.

Monsoon pushes up vegetable prices by 80%

AURANGABAD: The arrival of [monsoon](#) in the region may have given relief to Aurangabad citizens reeling under water scarcity, but it has negatively affected the arrival of vegetables in the Jadhavwadi wholesale market. Usuf Choudhary, president of Marathwada Fruit and Vegetable Association, said that the huge gap between demand and supply has pushed up prices. He said that most of the vegetables have registered a hike of 50 to 80% in the last 10 to 15 days.

"The quantity of green vegetables arriving in the city has almost come down to about one-third of the normal rate," he said on Tuesday.

Choudhary said that against the average demand of 200 quintal of ladies finger, only 50 quintal crop arrived in the wholesale market on Tuesday. "The average requirement of cluster beans is around 100 quintal, but only 50-60 quintal crop arrived. Other green vegetables too are falling short of actual requirement," he said.

However, Choudhary said that the prices would settle down in the next 30 to 40 days with the arrival of new crop from nearby places. At present vegetables from places like

Nashik, Pune, Hyderabad, Indore and Nagpur are arriving in Aurangabad, triggering a price rise.

N A Adhane, secretary of Aurangabad Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee, also confirmed that only one-third of the total requirement of green vegetable was arriving in the wholesale market. "More buyers and less availability are inflating the prices. On Tuesday, about 100 quintal tomato was brought in, where the requirement stood at more than 300 quintal," he explained.

A wholesale vegetable dealer in the market, Bhabubahi Khan, said, "There is fierce competition in the market and hence the prices are hitting a new high everyday. Vegetables are sold the moment they are brought in. The wholesale selling is over by 8 am, where as earlier it used to continue till 10 am."

Meanwhile Shivaji Adhav, a local retail vegetable vender in Gulmandi Sabji Market, said he was selling ladies fingers at Rs 60 per kg against Rs 40 per kg fifteen days back. "Capsicum was available at Rs 35 per kg but today it has gone up to Rs 80 per kg; brinjal jumped from Rs 30 per kg to Rs 50 per kg; cabbage jumped from Rs 15 per kg to Rs 25 per kg in the last fifteen days; cauliflower climbed from Rs 40 per kg to Rs 80 per kg; green chilli went from Rs 40 per kg to Rs 60 per kg and pumpkin climbed from Rs 20 per kg to Rs 30 per kg," he said.

Similarly, greens such as coriander, spinach and fenugreek which is sold in bunches have also witnessed a steep price rise. Prices of these green vegetables have increased by 70 to 80%. Onion prices have also gone up from Rs 15 per kg to Rs 20 per kg.

Good monsoon may not be good for the farmer

A good monsoon will bring some cheer to consumers, companies and the equity market. But bullish headlines will conceal the downside: this could be a dismal season for profitable farming.

A farmer has one objective: maximise returns from his piece of land. As the cost of inputs, labour, machinery and fuel rises, he needs more cash to cultivate and market his harvest. As the cost of living rises, he needs more cash to meet household expenses. High commodity prices bridge this gap and leave a little extra in the bank.

In the last one year, there has been a 20% rise in the cost of cultivation. The drought and freak winter weather did not allow farms to maximise yields. So, all hopes of recouping the 2012 losses are pegged on to this year. But 2013-14 may be disappointing. In the next six months, ample supply, desultory exports, competition from imports and the chances of a good harvest will keep the mandi prices lacklustre.

Rice, summer's largest crop, continues to sell barely above the minimum support price due to a glut in the local as well as world markets.

Cotton is India's biggest cash crop. In 2011-12, exports brought astonishing profits for lakhs of small farmers, turning cotton into white gold. This year, the world clothing market remains subdued and won't be able to absorb our excess supply. Prices could plunge in districts where the Cotton Corporation of India (the equivalent of FCI) is unable to reach.

Sugarcane farmers are cautious due to poor returns last season. Even an average-sized crop this September may leave them worried. Sugar mills are already complaining of losses. Many owe farmers money from last year. Put together, low commodity prices could play havoc with rural incomes.

Small and marginal farmers will be the worst hit. A recent survey by the Punjab Farmers Commission shows most farmers holding land up to 10 acres do not earn enough to

take care of their children's schooling. As they fail to make ends meet, despite a good harvest, more farmers will be pushed into the hands of moneylenders.

Does it matter to others? Yes. Rural people have emerged as an important growth engine in the Indian consumption story. Rural consumption per person outpaced urban consumption by 2%, says a Crisil study.

Depressed profits and dashed expectations will alter the mood in the so-called cash crop belts. There will be less impulsive shopping and less investment in everything from mobile phones and construction to gold and government saving schemes. Less disposable income in rural India means companies across sectors may have to re-work pricing and marketing strategies.

In short, a good monsoon poses a big question: how to insulate farmer income from falling commodity prices? Sadly, we have been so obsessed with shortages and rising prices that little attention has been paid to the problems created by plenty. After all, agriculture is not like industry. Factories can shut down or go slow if there is oversupply. Farms can't. Our entire production capacity of 140 million hectares is always in use.

In the US, crop insurance and other government programmes provide farmers a safety net. This is missing here. We offer limited government support through wheat and rice procurement. Other commodity farmers have to fend for themselves. Weather insurance becomes irrelevant during a good monsoon. There are no loan waivers.

Karnataka has promised a Farmers Income Commission to prevent agrarian distress. More states may be forced to find similar solutions.

With farming so unprofitable, an increasing number of families anyway earn more of their total income from off-farm jobs. Instead of NREGA, a programme for raising skill levels would help them escape the trap of pointless manual labour. But these are top-down, expensive, often politically contentious solutions.

Farmers urgently need modern tools they can easily understand and use wisely to deal with price risks. An immediate push to warehouse receipts, commodity hedging and legalising contract farming will go a long way to protect farmers from being impoverished by their own crop bounty.

Droughts and rising prices have lost their power to scare us. We know we can handle them. We now need the same dexterity in handling the aftermath of a good monsoon. For Indian farmers, and indeed the economy, they are two sides of the same coin.

Kolkata digs into organic spread

How would you like a dash of [pesticide](#) with your karela and potol? Or some coloured sawdust with your haldi? More and more Kolkatans are saying no to pesticide-laced vegetables and turning to organic food.

Going by the way demand is shooting up, it's clear that health-conscious buyers don't care that pesticide-free food comes at a price. Even the profile of organic food buyers has undergone a sea change. Even those who earn Rs 10,000 a month are buying up some kind of organic food, usually pulses, say retailers. "Some buy rice or pulses, some buy organic vegetables, some even go beyond that and buy exotic fruits grown in organic way," said Tanmay Modi, owner of Arome, one of the few all-organic food stores in Kolkata.

The frenzy over organic food has prompted big retailers to stock this new-age food. Spencer's offers a range of 250 products under the organic food category. The product basket consists of cereals, grains, flours, dry fruits, and even processed food products like pickles, jams, marmalade, honey, syrup, savouries and tea. "We have products from companies like 24-Letter Mantra, Organica, Pristine, Nourish Organic, Organic India are major players. We also have an imported organic range (Clear Spring) from countries like Japan," a Spencer's spokesperson said.

Most of the buyers walk up to the organic food shelves for rice, pulses and spices to start with. For Spencer's, dal (moong, tur and Bengal gram), rice and tea are the highest-selling organic products. [Suresh Agarwal](#), who has a shop near Lake market in Kolkata, feels the absence of chemical pesticides is the biggest trigger for high sale of organic foodgrains. "The prices are almost double for the organic variant. For example, if normal masoor dal sells for Rs 70 per kg, the organic variety is priced around Rs 130 per kg. While non-organic haldi is Rs 150 per kg, you have to pay Rs 300 per kg for the organic variety," Agarwal said.

Interestingly, of all the products offered by various branded or non-branded shops under the organic category, organic tea sells the most in Kolkata. But how well are Kolkatans adopting organic food? Sale is growing by 60% year on year, said a Spencer's spokesperson. "The demand is expected to grow at around 90% during the next year and the product line will increase towards oil, breakfast cereal, tea, honey etc," he added.

What about the exotic ones like macadamia nut, hazel nut or prunes? "They are obviously more expensive as we have to import them. For example, exotic nuts grown organically are priced almost 70% higher than the non-organic varieties," said Modi of Arome. Organic food buyers also go for items like organic spa products such as dead sea salt.

Going by the experience of the retailers, organic food is still a very small portion of their revenue. For Spencer's it is as low as 0.3%. "The reason being a higher price and very low awareness base. Majority of the shoppers are still not aware of the difference between natural food and organic food," said the Spencer's spokesperson. But it's growing.

The organic market in US began evolving in the 1960s and '70s and flourished gradually. It took three decades before organic food could gather enough stature to

merit the introduction of nationwide US Department of Agriculture certification standards in 2002. Kolkata is only just catching on to the organic craze. The idea that you actually vote for a safer and healthier planet every time you shop for organic good also helps.

Though organic fruits, vegetables and products command a premium now, economists will tell you that if demand shoots up, price will tumble. Environmentalists will tell you that organic food will keep you fit and away from diseases as they contain more nutrients, less toxins and zero pesticides. And you will find that the food has suddenly started tasting better. Finally, farmers will be happy as you will be supporting many small-scale organic food growing communities. If a large number of people opt for organic food, agricultural farms will be forced to move to more sustainable farming methods.

"Organic food has been in the Kolkata market for a few years but the frenzy has caught on after a Bollywood star promoted it in a television show," said Modi. People in the city are conscious about their health but they are also careful about the price they pay.

"Pricing is a stumbling block for organic food to grow its market share, but people have also started becoming aware of its benefits and they are ready to pay for that," he said.

Inflation drops to 4.7% in May

The WPI-based inflation fell to 4.7% in May, driven mainly by declining prices of manufactured items, even as prices of food articles inched up.

Inflation based on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) stood at 4.89% in April. In May, 2012, it was 7.55%.

As per official data released on Friday, WPI inflation in the manufactured items category declined to 3.11% in May from 3.41% in April.

The non-food articles category, which include fibre, oil seeds and minerals, saw sharp decline in inflation to 4.88%, from 7.59% in April.

However, inflation in food articles category, which has a 14.34% share in the WPI basket, rose to 8.25% in May. Inflation in this category was at 6.08% in April.

The rise in food inflation was on account of increase in prices of onions, vegetables, cereals and protein-based items.

Inflation in vegetables stood at 4.85% in May, against (-)9.05% in the previous month.

The rate of price rise in onion was high at 97.40% for the month, as against inflation rate of 91.69% in April.

Inflation for March was revised downwards to 5.65% from 5.96% as per provisional estimates.

The inflation data will be closely watched by the Reserve Bank while formulating its mid-quarter policy which is scheduled on Monday.

There have been demands for a lower interest rate in the backdrop of declining inflation.

Finance ministry sources, commenting on inflation numbers, said they would want lower interest rates and monetary policy transmission.

While the Reserve Bank has lowered interest rates by 1.30% since January 2012, the banks have cut lending rates by only 0.30%.

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, Jun 19

Max 36° | Min 29°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 49
Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:43
Sunset: 06:37
Barometer: 1004

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Jun 20

Max 35° | Min 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Jun 21



35° | 27°
Cloudy

Saturday
Jun 22



35° | 27°
Overcast

Sunday
Jun 23



34° | 28°
Overcast

Monday
Jun 24



36° | 27°
Overcast

Tuesday
Jun 25



36° | 27°
Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:23
Humidity: 94 Sunset: 07:21
Wind: normal Barometer: 1001



Farmers opposing SIR take out rally

Protesting [farmers](#) from about 44 villages today visited the state capital Gandhinagar to voice their opposition against the proposed [special investment region](#) (SIR) in Mandal-Becharaji region which also houses [Maruti Suzuki](#) India's (MSI's) new manufacturing plant.

In the absence of Narendra Modi, who was in New Delhi, the farmers met state revenue minister Anandi Patel and expressed their discontent over parting with their land for the SIR. They also gave a memorandum to Patel seeking withdrawal of SIR which is proposed over 50,000 hectare.

The memorandum also stated that farmers are unwilling to part with their fertile land for the proposed project. The SIR covers a Maruti car plant located at Hansalpur village on Viramgam-Becharaji highway and the Gujarat government plans to develop it as an auto and knowledge hub.

Over 7,000 farmers took out a tractor rally to Gandhinagar shouting slogans, claiming that they would not give an inch of land to government for the SIR. "We do not want development at this cost, we will not part with our land for the SIR," said one farmer in the rally.

"We are not going to give even an inch of our land to the government. We do not want development at cost of our land," said Dajubhai Chavda of Vinzuvada village.

Joining the protest was local MLA Tejashree Patel of the Congress who said that government wants to acquire farmer's fertile land for industrial development. "This is a fertile land where farmers grow three crops a year. The government first acquired their

pasture land, their wasteland and now they want their fertile land," Patel said.

Among those supporting the farmers were former Gujarat finance minister Sanat Mehta, former BJP MLA Kanu Kalsariya, who spearheaded the agitation against Nirma's cement plant at Mahuva in Bhavnagar, former Planning Commission member Y K Alagh, besides social activists.

On Monday, talks between state ministers and farmers remained inconclusive.

Earlier on June 11, farmers from Mandal taluka had met state government officials at Dalod village to discuss the details of the development plan of the proposed SIR. However, talks remained inconclusive. Farmers had submitted an affidavit signed by close to 10,000 villagers of the region opposing the coming up of the SIR to Pankaj Patel, the chief executive officer (in-charge) of Mandal-Becharaji SIR at Gandhinagar later that day.

Farmers feel that the proposed SIR would have an adverse impact on the agriculture, animal husbandry and fodder.

Digital Bazar for farmers launched

The state government today launched [Digital Bazar](#) scheme by distributing [mobile phones](#) among 5,000 [farmers](#), who will benefit by staying updated with real-time market prices of [farm produces](#).

Along with prices of farm goods, they will be provided information on weather forecast and other farming tips through SMS and voice call, said a release from the government.

The Digital Bazar, created with the help of IIT Kharagpur and Bharata Sanchar Nigam Ltd (BSNL), will be providing necessary information to the farmers.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who launched the scheme, said 2013 should be renamed as farmers' welfare year as the government has launched various programmes such as health insurance scheme for the benefit of 50 lakh farming families in the state.

Under the 'Digital Bazar' scheme, a total of 20,000 farmers will be provided mobile phones.

Vidarbha farmers may shift to soya crop this kharif season



Large number of traditional cotton growers in Vidarbha region may shift to soya this [Kharif season](#) as cropping pattern was set to change after the onset of monsoons, according to agriculture experts.

The total cotton sowing area is likely to be reduced by 10 lakh hectares from 40 lakh hectares on one hand and an increase by the same numbers in soya cultivation area may take place, since soya was a cash crop and yield was satisfactory in terms of akerage, they said.

"The shift from cotton could be more than the 10 percent that was anticipated initially," said Maharashtra State Cotton Growers' Co-operative Marketing Federation sources.

"One of the reasons could be the failure of the government to announce the minimum support price (MSP). This has fuelled fears that it may not fetch much more than Rs 3,900 a quintal it got last year. If a farmer knows before hand the price, it helps him

decide which crop to go for. Cotton growing has become costly and returns are poor," sources said.

Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti President Kishore Tiwari said this year a good beginning in the monsoons has helped farmers to kick start kharif operations on time. "But cotton, which for many years has been the main cash crop of Vidarbha, may give way to soyabean this year. Poor sales and demand for cotton seed in western Vidarbha's Amravati division indicates that farmers could shift from cotton to pulses like tur, chana and even linseed besides soyabean," Tiwari said

Confirming a lesser interest for cotton by farmers, a senior government official from Amravati division said that soyabean looks to be the preferred crop this year.

"The picture will be clear in only later this week. Farmers initially just make rounds to dealers to look around and do not buy anything. They take couple of days before deciding and then finalise on the crop," he said.

Untimely heavy rains might affect paddy crop in North India



Early rain is considered good for paddy. However, in [North India](#), heavy and unusually early rains have raised a red flag for the crop. In many places, farmers who were not expecting [heavy rains](#) so early had not even prepared their field for sowing. Also, low-lying areas have been flooded. If things don't improve soon, farmers will have to re-sow.

"If the fields remain drowned in water for more days, we will have to re-sow and replant.

The availability of seeds and other inputs to farmers from the state agriculture departments and agriculture universities can nullify the loss because we have time," said Trilochan Mohapatra, director, Rice Research Institute, Cuttack.

According to Mohapatra, paddy is grown in 44 million hectares in India. Of this, 12 per cent is sown in the rabi season in eastern and southern states. Farmers, particularly in Punjab and [Haryana](#), have their own worries. According to Jagtar Singh Mehma, a farmer from Bhatinda district of Punjab, the untimely rains could affect the crop if they continue for more time. He added that in the low-lying area of Bhatinda, farmers might have to re-sow their fields. Re-sowing in wet fields is done manually.

"Labour is scarce and expensive, so, sowing the crop again would put financial burden on the farmers," Mehma added.

Farmers in Haryana, too, are worried because those with small landholdings cannot afford to incur expenses again. Mohapatra acknowledged that north Indian states are in a more precarious situation than states in the east and south.

He added that the crop size is likely to be 104 million tonnes, if monsoon remains good. In the last two years, India registered the same output of rice.

Taking cognizance of shrinking land under paddy due to rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, Mohapatra said the new improved varieties can push the average yield from 2.5 tonnes per hectare to 3.5 tonne per hectare. Punjab is the only state in India having 3.5 million tonnes of rice productivity.

In times to come, scientific agricultural practices will become indispensable to feed the country, added Mohapatra.



PAY RS 500 BONUS FOR PADDY TO CHECK FARMER SUICIDES: BJP

The BJP leaders said that farmer suicide cases are on the rise in the State due to lack of agricultural infrastructure and irrigation facility, delay in supply of seeds and fertilisers and inability to repay the loans from different sources. If the Government wants Odisha as a farmer suicide-free State, it should take complete responsibility of proper marketing of agricultural produce by offering a good amount of bonus on the MSP, they added.

The farmers bring their paddy to sell in the Mandis and keep all their packets on open ground due to lack of godowns. During rains, the paddy becomes wet and is washed away like what happened recently in Kalahandi during the rains, they pointed out.

The party leaders said the BJD Government has distributed mobile phones to less than one per cent of the farmers. Without solving the farmers' core issues like irrigation facility, post-harvest management, remunerative prices for produces, market yards, timely supply of proper seeds and fertilisers, launching of Digital Mandis and distribution of mobile phones only creates confusion in the minds of the people, the leaders alleged.

The party demanded Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the families of the farmer who committed suicide and compensate the farmers of south and western Odisha who lost their crop during low pressure rain.

CM LAUNCHES DIGITAL MANDI FOR FARMERS

Patnaik distributed mobile phones to 5,000 farmers having Kisan Credit Cards in the first phase from the targeted 20,000 covering all the districts. Each mobile set costs Rs 1,000.

The farmers would get up-to-date information through free SMS, voice calls and expert advices relating to agriculture, said Patnaik. The remaining 15,000 beneficiaries would get the phones at district levels very shortly, he said.

Patnaik said the Government would set up 150 market yards across the State to strengthen the marketing infrastructure at the block level. An action plan has been finalised to reinforce the agricultural marketing in the State, he said.

He directed the departmental officials to take steps to avoid middlemen's interference while marketing agricultural produce of the farmers.

Cooperation Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha said Odisha is the second State in the country after Haryana to implement this scheme. The Odisha Government in a first-ever Agriculture Budget had announced the scheme for the lead farmers and had allocated Rs 2 crore for the scheme.

Arukha said the objective of the scheme is to empower farmers for proper planning of crops and better price realisation for their produce under the Digital Mandi Scheme, which is a Government of India project developed by the IIT, Kanpur.

According to officials, the farmers would have to register themselves with the Digital Mandi to get information on market prices of various agricultural produce in different markets of the country at their hand instantly through the mobile phones in form of voice call and SMS. The scheme would be implemented by the Regulated Market Committees (RMCs).

In order to update themselves, the farmers can also access the information on market prices of agricultural produce at any time in the Government of India's agmarknet.nic.in portal, said the officials.

Among others, Agriculture Minister Debi Prasad Mishra, Bhubaneswar MP Prasanna Patsani, city MLAs Ashok Panda, Bijay Mohanty and Bhagirathi Badajena, the Cooperation Department Secretary and professors of IIT, Kanpur were present.

NAVEEN TO GIVE FREE MOBILES TO 5,000 FARMERS TODAY

According to Cooperation Minister Bikram Keshari Arukha, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik would launch the scheme at a State level function to be held at Bhubaneswar. As many as 5,000 farmers from targeted 20,000, covering all the districts, would be given free mobile phones in the first phase.

The function will be held at the Exhibition Ground in the forenoon, which would be attended by Agriculture Minister Debi Mishra, Bhubaneswar Lok Sabha Member Prasanna Kumar Patsani, MLAs Ashok Chandra Panda, Bijoy Mohanty and Bhagirathi Badajena too.

Arukh said Odisha is the second State in the country after Haryana to implement the scheme. Finance Minister Prasanna Acharya in his first ever Agriculture Budget had announced the scheme for the lead farmers.

Each mobile to be distributed for free will cost Rs 1,000. Arukh said the objective of the scheme is to empower the farmers for proper planning of crops and better price realization for their produce under the Digital Mandi Scheme, a Government of India Project, which has been developed by the IIT, Kanpur.

He said the farmers would have to register themselves with the Digital Mandi to get information on market prices of various agricultural produce in different markets of the country at their hand instantly through the mobile phones in form of voice call and SMS. The scheme would be implemented by the Regulated Market Committees (RMCs). In order to update themselves, the farmers can also access the information on market prices of agricultural produce at any time in the Government of India's agmarknet.nic.in portal.

DECCAN Chronicle

Wednesday, Jun 19, 2013 | Last Update : 10:18 AM IST

Inquiry into irregularities in farm wing



Nellore: Additional commissioner of agriculture Vijayalakshmi has conducted an inquiry into the allegations of farmers' association against the higher officials of district agriculture department here on Tuesday.

She gave a patient hearing to the farmers' association leaders M. Ravindra Reddy, P. Rami Reddy, Ramireddy Krishna Reddy and Srinivasulu Reddy during the probe.

The leaders blamed former manager of AP Seeds for supplying poor quality seed to the farmers. They alleged that the officials of the department have produced fake bills to make a quick buck during the agriculture convention held in August last year.

According to them, the department had paid Rs1.20 lakh for a catering company for providing food to the farmers during the convention although only Pulihora (lemon rice) packets were distributed for 50-odd farmers then.

Similarly, the department heads have raised bill for Rs 1.20 lakh for shamianas (tents) for the convention even though the expenses were borne by some fertiliser and pesticide companies.

According to the association members, the senior officials had collected Rs 20,000 from 35 candidates selected for agriculture extension officer posts last year besides bribes for internal transfers during the same period.

Vijayalakshmi said that she would submit her inquiry report to the government shortly.