THE

GAIL: hearing of farmers from tomorrow

Federation seeks Chief Minister's intervention into the issue

Even as the State Government is gearing up for hearing farmers district-wise from Wednesday on their contentions over the proposed laying of pipeline by the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL), the Farmers Livelihood Protection Federation has urged the Chief Minister to personally look into the issue.

G.K. Nagaraj of the Federation pointed out that while the farmers had been fighting to save their livelihood, GAIL attempted to suppress them and continue with the pipeline laying work.

There had been many representations and appeals in Parliament by Coimbatore MP P.R. Natarajan, who is also president of the Federation.

Following suicide attempts by two farmers near Uthukuzhi, the opposition to the project grew stronger and now the High Court had asked GAIL to stop the work and hear the farmers.

Original proposal

The original proposal of GAIL was to lay pipeline from Ernakulam to Bangalore for a distance of 870-odd km and the project was named Kochi — Kootanad — Bangalore — Mangalore Pipeline Project Limited.

The pipeline would be laid for 510 km through Kerala and another 310 km through Tamil Nadu (via Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Namakkal, Salem, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts). The total project cost was Rs. 3,263 crore.

Mr. Nagaraj said that while laying the pipeline in Kerala, agriculture lands were avoided and the project was implemented with minimum setback to the farming community there.

However, GAIL was adamant on laying the pipeline through agriculture lands in Tamil Nadu.

GAIL was offering only 10 per cent of the guideline value of the land and the lowest compensation cheque disbursed recently was for Rs. 13 to a farmer in the region, he added.

According to Mr. Nagaraj, the pipeline with sterile space on either side will require 63 ft and also two acres of land in every five-km distance.

The space used by GAIL cannot be used by the farmers because of its conditions that there should be no well, bore well, tree or house and no long term crops near the pipeline area.

Considering the project cost, constraints in higher compensation for farmers and the future implications, Mr. Nagaraj urged the Chief Minister to intervene and ensure that GAIL executed the project in Tamil Nadu as in the lines of Kerala.

Officials are scheduled to commence the hearing with farmers from March 6 in Chennai.

GAIL issue: hearing of Krishnagiri farmers on March 7



An official from Revenue Department serving notices on farmers affected by the gas pipeline project of GAIL in Nellur near Royakottai on Monday.

Chief Secretary Sheela Balakrishnan will conduct a public hearing from the farmers of Denkanikottai and Hosur taluks in Krishnagiri on March 7 to ascertain their views on the pipeline project of Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL).

It would be conducted at the meeting hall of the Anna Institute of Management, 163/1, B.S. Kumarasamy Raja Salai, Raja Annamalaipuram, Chennai at 12 noon, according to a release from District Collector T.P. Rajesh here on Monday.

It may be noted that as per the recent orders of the Madras High Court, the Chief Minister announced that the government would get the views of the farmers to find an amicable solution for the gas pipeline project.

Mr. Rajesh appealed to the farmers from the two taluks to take part in the public hearing.

Farm ponds may mitigate sufferings of farmers

Efforts are afoot to set up farm ponds throughout the district, C. Natarajan, Collector, said here recently.

Speaking at the agriculturists' grievances day here, he said as the district was totally dependent on agriculture, all the schemes were implemented in a way that would benefit the farmers. By creating farm ponds, it would be possible to improve the water sources. Besides, deepening of tanks and increasing water sources were the major initiatives of the administration that would obviate the suffering of farmers.

For this, various departments, including Agriculture, Agricultural Engineering, Horticulture, and Public Works had joined hands.

Besides, new technology requisite for improving agriculture had been discussed and schemes were being implemented, the Collector added.

At the meeting, various farmers demanded subsidised seeds, reduction in tractor rent, roads, diesel subsidy, and more buses. They pleaded that the encroachments affecting the bus stand should be removed and the bunds of the tanks should be strengthened.

Water level

: Water level in the Periyar dam on Monday stood at 112.50 feet (136 feet) with an inflow and a discharge of 105 cusecs each. The level in the Vaigai dam was 47.24 feet (71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 2,224 mcft.

: Water level in the Papanasam dam on Monday stood at 42.85 feet. The dam had an inflow of 136 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs of water is discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 80.34 feet with an inflow of 10 cusecs and 30 cusecs of water is discharged.

Nagercoil

The water level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 3.70 feet, 36.45 feet in Perunchani, 4.92 feet in Chittar I, 5.02 feet in Chittar II and 5.70 feet in the Poigai dam.

Water supply restored

Pipeline worn out at several places

: The Kerala Water Authority (KWA) said water supply in the city had been restored to normal by noon on Monday. The supply of water was disrupted after a 1,200-mm prestressed concrete (PSC) transmission mainline carrying water from Aruvikkara to the Observatory Hills in the city burst near Kummi here on Sunday. KWA Chief Engineer (South) P. Sreekumaran Nair said the repair works were completed by 8 a.m. on Monday. Trial pumping was done around 10 a.m.. Full-fledged pumping began later and supply was restored in most places by 12 noon, he said.

Senior officials of the KWA, including Managing Director Ashok Kumar Singh and Mr. Nair, were at the spot near the Kummi pump-house since Sunday. A workforce comprising 40 men was engaged in the work.

Mr. Singh told *The Hindu* that the Rs.50-crore project for laying a new mild steel (MS) pipeline to replace the 1200-mm PSC pipe might be completed by August. The pipe that burst on Sunday was worn out at several places

However, till the new MS pipeline is commissioned, there is no alternative but to complete repairs as fast as possible. Arrangements, including supply by tankers, mainly from the PTP Nagar reservoir, would be streamlined to remove existing bottlenecks.

One option, to avoid such disruptions caused by burst in mainlines carrying water to the city, was to connect the three reservoirs at Peroorkada, PTP Nagar and Observatory Hills. However, it is a major project and would take at least another five years to become a reality.



Fall in water level

Due to poor rain:Water level in the catchment area of the Thenmala Dam in Kollam district has dipped to an unprecedented low as a result of the poor rainfall during last year.— Photo: C. Suresh Kumar

Farmers set fire to their crops

It follows seepage of saline water into paddy fields

Distressed paddy farmers have set their crop on fire at Vechoor. The extreme step on the part of the farmers comes in the wake of widespread destruction of the crop following seepage of saline water into the polders.

According to farmers representatives L. Karthikeyan, Paddy Producers Coordination committee president T. O. Varghese and others, all freshwater sources have dried up in the unprecedented drought situation prevailing in the area following which saline water had seeped into the polders both from the Vembanad lake side and Muvattupuzha river side. The polders, usually used for single crop, were brought under two cropping system only last year on an experimental basis. The Agriculture Department maintained that the drought situation had resulted in the loss of fresh water.

Farmers spending a fortune on borewells in parched Marathwada



RUINOUS COSTS:Jija Motale (with headscarf) of Rui village, Jalna, supervising the filling of his well with water from a private tanker. While he may have enough water now, he doubts if he can salvage his 250 sweet-lime trees in the long run.— Photo: Shoumojit Banerjee

As Marathwada's groundwater table plummets to 500 ft, farmers here, as in other districts, are freely violating the law in a frantic bid to strike water. Mahadeo Mule has invested Rs. 1 lakh during the past five months to save his crops and livestock, drilling at five different points on his land, despite already having a borewell. He has also spent close to Rs. 35,000 on water from private tankers.

This is in contravention of the Maharashtra Groundwater (Regulation for Drinking Water Purposes) Act, 1993, that prohibits the sinking of a well within 500 m of a public

drinking water source in the same watershed source. "Earlier, if one dug 40 ft, one struck water. People today are digging up to 500 feet," said Marathwada Statutory Development Board member Vijay Diwan.

As Maharashtra's parched Marathwada region is in the throes of a full-blown water crisis, a disastrous fusion of government torpor coupled with water intensive cropping patterns are proving catastrophic for the villagers of Rui in the drought-prone Ambad taluk. Its 2,200-strong populace is gambling on the monsoon this year and spending every last paisa on water in a bid to salvage their crops and livestock.

"The villagers here dread to think of the fatal possibility of rains failing this June," says Dattatray Bhagat, who has invested Rs. 45,000 on water since August last year to keep his sweet-lime crop alive. Others, like Sultan Sheikh, have not been so lucky. His cotton and sweet-lime crops have been completely scorched by the sun. The output from his two-acre land has been a paltry jowar yield of 8 kg.

Despite sustainable watershed initiatives in the district and the existence of almost 9,000 micro-watersheds in the region, extensive water conservation has only taken off at the community-level with no concrete push from the State government. Water and agriculture experts advise that Marathwada farmers need to make a drastic shift from growing water-intensive cash crops, like sugar and cotton, in a region with a chronic shortage. "How can we profit if we do not invest in cash crops," asks Mr. Sheikh.Rui, like hundreds of other villages across the region, depends primarily on the waters of the Jayakwadi dam for its drinking and irrigation functions. With the dam's live water storage levels sinking dangerously to a dismal two per cent, the hardships of farmers here have been aggravated by the increase in upstream water utilisation in the districts of Western Maharashtra. Shiru Rajguru's one-acre sweet-lime crop has been totally ruined, saddling him with a debt of Rs. 75,000. There is no water in most villages here. In Partur, one of the worst-hit of the district's eight taluks, there is not a single government tanker to cater to the needs of the populace.

A private tanker costs Rs. 300 only for the actual operation of pumping water into wells. Apart from this, the charge is anywhere between Rs. 1,500-2,000 per trip. These costs are expected to rise with the mounting summer.

To enable them cope with their increased water costs, a collective refrain from the farmers is the demand for payment of their insurance claims. The farmers who pay Rs. 1,100 per acre for cotton, Rs. 3,600 for sweet-lime, state they could spend the money received in insurance claims to mitigate their water troubles.

Despondent with the total ruin of the cotton crop, Ramesh Lamge has decided to dabble in ancillary businesses. He now ferries people in a shared autorickshaw from village to village. "I bought a rickshaw last October when things started to go really bad... I have my wife, elderly parents and my field to look after," he says. Mr. Lamge makes between Rs. 150-200 a day. His friends quip he is rehearsing for his new job in the city. Farmers agree that the spectre of migration is haunting them.

Temporary fixes, like providing steady work under employment guarantee schemes like the MGNREGS, have failed despite 990 approved schemes in eight taluks of Jalna at a cost of Rs. 553 crore.

"I am trying to salvage the 250 sweet-lime trees that remain of my crop on my 10 acres of land," says Jija Motale, who has invested close to Rs. 50,000 to buy private water and keep his crop going. "If rains fail us this time... then migration to the big city [Mumbai] is the only option," he remarks.

An inexplicable lack of fodder camps bedevils Jalna, though the government claims it spends Rs. 1.6 crore every day in the State.

"A majority of these funds find their way to the camps in Western Maharashtra," alleges Babanrao Lonikar, a former Bharatiya Janata Party MLA from Partur Taluk in Jalna.

The State electricity distribution company has filed cases against nearly 1,000 people in two electricity divisions of the district this year.

"Electricity bills are collected forcefully and on non-payment, the company resorts to disconnection... We anyway get power only for a few hours each day," says Eknath Patekar, another farmer.

The district, meanwhile, has witnessed political rallies in rapid succession by Uddhav Thackeray, Sharad Pawar and most recently by Raj Thackeray. Maybe the politicians will come up with something... After all, they need our votes next year, don't they?" hope villagers, as they await the next political show in town.

KBJNL releases water, farmers exultant

The State government, after being pressured by farmers in the command area of the Upper Krishna Project (UKP), has directed Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigam Ltd. (KBJNL) to release 4,500 cusecs of water into the Narayanpur Left Bank Canal and 1,000 cusecs into the right bank canal to save standing crops in the command area in Raichur district.

According to sources here on Sunday, the storage in the Narayanpur dam stood at 17.542 tmcft, as against its full capacity of 33.313 tmcft.

After taking into consideration the water required for drinking water schemes covered from Narayanpur dam and Alamatti reservoir, and for power generation in the Raichur Thermal Power Station, KBJNL has begun releasing water in both the canals from Sunday. The former Minister Narasimha Naik, along with legislators Manappa Vajjal and Shivanagouda Naik had also participated in the farmers' agitation. Member of the Irrigation Consultative Committee Naganna Dandin said that although farmers would need water to be released till March-end to save standing crops, the present decision would help save the groundnut crops in the command area.

Call to strengthen farm sector

There is an urgent need to strengthen the farm sector, especially in attaining selfsufficiency in food production, in the face of steady decline in land available for cultivation and the new generation increasingly turning to other sectors for livelihood, Vice-Chancellor of the Kerala Agricultural University P. Rajendran has said.

It will be prudent to remember that a consumer State like Kerala, in particular, could not afford to pull on for long without streamlining the farm sector and attaining self-sufficiency in food production, Dr. Rajendran said.

He was addressing the gathering after inaugurating a day-long seminar on 'Kerala's agriculture development and emerging technology,' hosted by the district unit of the Kerala Union of Working Journalists as part of the year-long celebration to mark the union's golden jubilee at the Municipal Conference Hall here on Monday.

The district administration along with local bodies could draw up a production plan and promote cultivation to meet the food requirements of their respective areas.

The seminar underscored the need for effective government intervention to ensure remunerative prices for cultivators.

Seminar on farm practices

The two-day seminar on 'Changing agriculture scene and practices' organised by Doordarshan Kendra, Thiruvanathapuram, will be inaugurated by Shafi Parambil, MLA, at Town Hall Annex here on Tuesday at 9.30 a.m. The meeting will be presided over by district panchayat president T.N. Khandamuthan. The 'Nelkathir' award will be present to T.I. Viswanathan and 'Ksheera Karshaka' award to Sacaria Pillai at the function.

Glut of small onions leaves farmers tearyeyed



peeled off:Huge arrivals of small onion from Karnataka to the wholesale market in Dindigul, on Monday result in price cut.— Photo: G. Karthikeyan

Bumper harvest and huge arrivals from Mysore as well as from different parts of Dindigul, Tirupur and Coimbatore districts have pushed the prices of small onion to rock bottom, forecasting bleak future for onion producers in the months to come.

Within a week, Dindigul wholesale market, one of the biggest markets in the State, has witnessed a 50 percent slump in small onion prices. The situation would deteriorate further in the coming months, predict commission agents and traders.

The prices that were hovering between Rs.35 and Rs.40 in the last week of February fell to Rs.18 and Rs.20 a kg, depending on quality and size of onions.

They fear that prices may go down to Rs.10 and Rs.12, if the present arrivals continue in the coming months.

With bumper harvests in Karnataka, farmers throng the Dindigul market with several truck loads of small onions.

At the same time, onions produced in Vellode, Sengurichi, Senthurai, Chinnalapatti, Eriyode, Vedasandur, Oddanchatram, Vadamadurai, Iyyalur and Gujiliamparai in the district are too hitting the market from March 1, thanks to commencement of harvesting. Now, arrivals from Karnataka are around 4,000 to 5,000 bags (each bag contains 80 kg) that were 1,500 to 2,000 bags a day last month, says V. Rajendran, leading onion trader in Dindigul market.

Export to Sri Lanka from Dindigul is almost nil. Poor off-take by Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, major importers of Indian onions from Dindigul, too weakened the situation.

Between October and November, Dindigul market had exported 90 per cent of small onions to these countries. Now, traders were struggling to export even 10 per cent of the total arrivals. "Domestic market alone is not enough to sell the entire arrivals," adds Rajendran. "If this trend continues, farmers would face worse situations in the coming months because onions produced from Udumalpet, Thuraiyur, Tiruchi and Perambalur, some of the major onion producing centres in the State, too would flood the market in the next two months."

"When there is a sharp fall in production, traders make spot procurement. Now, we bring onions to the market and we have to bear the freight charges. With sharp increase in diesel prices, truck operators have increased freight charges exorbitantly. Present procurement price does not match even freight charges and production costs", says Guruhitha Naicka, another farmer from Kollegal.

World Agriculture Congress brochure

Agriculture Minister Kanna Laxminarayana and several other officials from the State will attend a function at New Delhi on Tuesday in connection with the release of brochure for World Agriculture Congress here from November 4.

It will be released by Union Minister of State for Agriculture Tariq Anwar. MPs from the State, Director General of ICAR S. Ayyappan are among those to attend the function, a release said.





Horticulture workers staging a demonstration in Udhagamandalam on Monday.- Photo: M. Sathyamoorthy

Hundreds of horticulture workers of various parks run by the Tamil Nadu Horticulture Development Agency (TANHODA), including the Government Botanical Garden, the Government Rose Garden, and the Sim's Park abstained from work on Monday and staged a demonstration in front of the office of the Joint Director of Horticulture at Vijayanagaram here.

Tamil Nadu Government Office Assistants and Basic Servants Association state president said the agitation was to draw the attention of the Government to the long standing demands of the farm

workers in The Nilgiris district. Workers who had completed ten years of service should be regularised and they should be brought under the time-scale system, he said.

Those eligible should be promoted as junior assistants.

The retirement age of the farm workers should be raised to 60. Their wages and allowances should be raised. Basic servants should be exempted from payment of professional tax. Mr. Ganesan added that a rally would be organised, near the Secretariat on April 8.

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Maize may help Punjab farmer shoo wheat-paddy maze

CHANDIGARH: For farmers in Punjab, looking to break the vicious waterguzzling wheat-paddy cycle the new golden crop could be maize and fancy vegetables. Even before the Central government shifted the new green revolution to eastern states, <u>Punjab Agriculture University</u> is prompting farmers to wean off the mandated crops.

A meet of progressive farmers in the country's food bowl saw the agriculture scientists stressing on farmers to dump wheat and paddy and grow maize, fruits and vegetables instead to bring down their production costs. "By cultivating maize, farmers can protect the worsening quality of soil, save 90% of water and 70% of power as compared to paddy and earn far more than they are earning through paddy and wheat," said Dr Baldev Singh Dhillon, vice chancellor, Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana.

And many have taken the lead. Gurpreet Singh, a farmer who owns three acres near Ludhiana, said, "I stopped sowing paddy or wheat over eight years ago. My power bills got lighter and drip irrigation ensured smooth sail even in tough months and I earned Rs 1.5 lakh per acre, more than what I made from paddy."

What has made maize a happy choice for farmers is its easy marketing. "There are at least 500 products which use maize as an ingredient, right from the shell of capsules in the pharmaceutical sector to biofuels like ethanol, besides uses in textile sector, alcohol, tyres and brewing industry," said Sain Dass, former director, maize, Indian Agricultural Research Institute.

In Punjab, 70% of frozen sweet corn is imported from Maharashtra with Rs 30 per kg as transportation costs. "This gap can be filled by Punjabi farmers and the good part is that the crop is ready in 90 days," said Mangal Singh Sandhu, director, agriculture.

For others like S S Bhullar from Bathinda, who won the best horticulturist award by the Central government in 2002, kinnows have brought about a revolution. "Out of 63 acres of the family, we are growing kinnows in 58 acres and doing the sorting and grading as well. Kinnows are a happy choice for farmers as the shelf life is high. There is hardly any option in fruit processing except for just two units in the entire state. The government is indifferent and has done nothing to help farmers market their produce," said Bhullar.

Still others, like Jagdeep Singh, have found their salvation in producing strawberries. "I was making less than Rs 1 lakh from an acre growing wheat. After I started growing strawberries, my profit has multiplied three fold," said Jaspreet whose fruits are now being sent to Delhi as well.

Stats:

Total area under fruit plants in Punjab — 61,500 hectare

Yield per annum — 15 lakh tonnes

Total area under vegetables — over 2 lakh hectares

Yield per annum - 30 lakh tonnes

Chronicle

The tree of life

DC | Alok Anand | 03rd Mar 2013



I love taking a train ride from the north of India to the south, when time permits. As a child, my otherwise poor appetite would perk up on the train and I would want to eat anything that

came my way. Nagpur oranges, chikki, Agra petha, roasted peanuts, hot samosas, bhajjis, mango salad... sigh! Those were fun days!

Minus the track-side junk-food, train rides these days are equally fun to watch how the geography of the country changes colours as you pass through the Vindhyas and head towards the southern parts. Brown wheat-growing grasslands give way to green paddyfields, the skyline is painted a beautiful shade of green, swaying in the breeze are tall coconut and palm trees. The Pacific Islanders called it the Tree of Life and it took me more than a couple of months of working in the south to understand why!

Yes, for a long time, south Indian cuisine to me meant an overdose of 'coconut' and 'chillies'. It is true that a lot of southern cooking uses coconut in some form or the other — for garnish, for flavour, for that little crunch or just for a different kind of texture. I always feared that coconut would overpower any delicate recipe, but it wasn't until I tasted the quintessentially Tamil Brahmin specialty —Thenganikkai Annam aka coconut rice — that I fell head-over-heels in love with its delicious flavour and texture. The fine shavings garnished with just the right amount of spices and mixed with rice... divine food, I must say!

Elaneer Payasam is another example of how tender coconut lends itself amazingly to a delicate balance of fine taste and light texture.

Not just in Indian cuisine, coconut also gives continental desserts a well-rounded flavour, which you will find out when you make the caramel custard with coconut and a hint of ginger...

Well, what do you know? It's safe to say that I am a coconut addict these days!

Quick facts

- Contrary to popular belief, eating coconut helps prevent obesity by speeding up metabolism and providing immediate energy with fewer calories compared to other fats.
- Got a sweet tooth? Control your sugar intake by eating coconut as it improves insulin secretion and the utilisation of blood glucose.
- 3 wins for coconut: No trans-fats, gluten-free, hypoallergic!

Thenganikai annam (Coconut-flavoured fragrant pilaf)



Ingredients:

- Ponni raw rice 400 gm
- Grated coconut 4 tbsp
- Coconut oil 2 tbsp
- Chana dal 1 tsp
- Broken cashew nuts 2 tsp
- Asafoetida 1 tsp
- Mustard seeds 1 tsp
- Button chilli 4
- Green chilli (finely chopped) 4
- Curry leaves 10
- Salt to taste

Method:

- Wash and soak rice for thirty minutes.
- Boil enough water $(2\frac{1}{2}$ times the quantity of rice) in a vessel and cook the rice till soft.
- Strain the rice and allow to cool.
- Heat a pan over medium heat, add coconut oil.
- Add mustard seeds and let it splutter, then add button chilli, curry leaves and asafoetida.
- Add the chana dal and cashew nuts, keep stirring occasionally till golden brown.
- Add the grated coconut and boiled rice, mix gently.
- Check for seasoning and serve hot.

Coconut ginger caramel custard



Ingredients:

- Sugar 75 + 50 gm
- Egg yolk 4
- Egg (whole) 1
- Milk 200 ml
- Cream 100 ml
- Coconut milk 100 ml
- Coconut milk powder 50 gm

- Ginger (peeled, roughly cut) 20 gm
- Dry coconut (copra) sliced into rings and roasted till golden brown (for garnish) 4 slices

Method:

- Preheat oven to 175 deg C.
- On medium heat, place a pan. Add 50 gm sugar and let it caramelise. Pour caramel into 6 custard cups or ramekins. Place these into a roasting pan.
- Heat milk in another pan. Add the ginger and simmer at low heat for 5-7 minutes.
- Strain the milk, add the sugar (75 gm), cream, coconut milk and coconut milk powder. Stir to mix well. Whisk the egg and the yolk into this mixture.
- Pour into the custard cups.
- Pour enough hot water on the roasting pan to come halfway up the sides of cups. Place into the oven and bake for 30-35 minutes, until custard is just set in centre.
- Remove the cups/ramekins, let it cool. Then refrigerate for at least 45 minutes.
- Run a knife on the inner sides of the cup and de-mould the custard on a plate.
- Garnish with the toasted coconut slices.

Business Standard^b

Strong consumption may push up robusta coffee prices

Demand for robusta coffee beans in major consuming countries has been growing



Robusta coffee prices are likely to increase in the coming quarter on the back of higher demand from major consuming countries. Robusta prices are currently hovering around \$2,100 a tonne. Prices have more or less been holding steady for the past year.

"The new trend in robusta consumption started last year following high prices for Arabica (a species of coffee). The roasters and retail coffee chains started serving robusta, as it is considered to be good material for getting creamy coffee in the retail stores. Also, the instant coffee market started using more robusta variety. All these led to rise in the prices of robusta," said Nishant R Gurjer, chairman,

Karnataka Planters' Association.

In addition, the robusta crop in Vietnam, the largest producer of the variety, is expected to be lower by 8-12 per cent for the coming year, as the country is facing drought this year.

"Robusta export pace from Vietnam is expected to fall after January, as 9.9 million bags, 41 per cent of our export forecast, have been shipped in the first four months of the season. We anticipate London robusta prices need to trade near \$2,100 per tonne to ensure selling meets demand on the assumption that origin price differentials only shift modestly," Rabobank said in its latest forecast.

The Rabobank analysts also forecast that global robusta consumption will rise three per cent in 2012-13, while global production will increase only one per cent. Currently, 60 million bags of robusta are consumed globally, compared to 90 million bags of arabica (each bag is 60 kg).

"There is a lot of demand of robusta in the markets of Russia, East Europe and in new markets such as South Korea, where people are shifting from tea. Robusta is being preferred as consumers are looking for robusta as a cheap substitute," Gurjer added.

The production in Vietnam is likely to be lower by 12-15 per cent for the coming season, compared to last year's crop size of 25 million bags.

Indonesian robusta crop production is up 47 per cent year-on-year, which will be used to fulfil rising global consumption.

"Robusta prices will likely shift higher in the coming quarters based on the export data from Indonesia and Vietnam, and we anticipate reduced numbers encouraging investor buying," said Rabobank.

India's robusta crop for the current year is likely to be on expected lines of the Coffee Board and growers \clubsuit " at 210,000 tonnes. The reasons for subdued production estimates are attributed to the normal berry drop during the monsoon period and black rot and stalk rot (plant diseases) in certain high rainfall areas.

'Cotton Corporation failed to protect farmers' interest'

Committee visited Warangal agriculture market yard on Feb 8 following flash protest by the cotton farmers on being denied MSP



The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has not been following the guidelines either on opening the notified procurement centres or on offering proper value to the farmers' produce, according to a fact finding committee headed by former Andhra Pradesh high court judge Justice G Bikshapathi.

The committee visited the Warangal agriculture market yard, one of the largest cotton markets in the state, on February 8 following a flash protest by the cotton farmers on being denied the minimum support price (MSP).

In this specific incident, the cotton bags brought by the farmers got soaked in sudden rains as the market yard had no overhead cover to protect the farm produce from such eventualities. The CCI officials, on the other hand, had made deductions in the value of cotton on that account.

Justice Bikshapathi said though the Warangal Agriculture Market Committee was responsible for the damage caused by the rain, the farmers had to incur the loss as the CCI officials did not lift the stocks in time even after declaring the price for the same.

Even otherwise also the CCI officials were found to be making deductions in the value of cotton without following any scientific procedures such as the usage of moisture metre etc, he said. The corporation also failed to open 11 procurement centres as notified by the management forcing the farmers to bring their produce to the lone centre at Warangal from far off places, according to him.

Farmers are also being exploited by commission agents and other middlemen at the market yard and their condition is no different in other market yards in the state, he said.

Business Line

'Cotton growers hit by irregularities in Warangal market yard'

HYDERABAD, MARCH 4:

An independent fact-finding committee has noted several irregularities and inadequate facilities at the Agriculture Market Committee at Warangal in Andhra Pradesh, leading to cotton farmers getting a price much less than the MSP.

The fact-finding committee, headed by Justice G. Bikshapathi, former Judge, AP High Court, was instituted by the Consortium of Indian farmers Associations and other local farmers' bodies, following complaints from farmers in the district.



The committee observed that although the Cotton Corporation of India had issued notification for the establishment of 11 cotton purchasing centres in the district to help farmers save on transportation, there was still a lone centre serving the farmers.

"Stocks are thus exposed to rain and fire. Further, farmers are supposed to get Rs 25 by CCI per gunny bag, but for the last two years they are not paid anything for the bags," Bikshapathi told newspersons here today.

Farmers had supplied 80 lakh empty bags to CCI for the last two years, for which they had not received any money.

Farmers got a particularly low price for their produce in the first week of February when the district was lashed by heavy rains. "To make matters worse, the market yard has no proper moisture testing meters and officials just slash the cotton bags in the middle and judge the moisture content by feeling the cotton with their hands. Prices are thus fixed on the basis of whatever moisture content the officials claim in the cotton," he said. "As per the AMPC Act, commission agents are entitled only for one per cent commission, but we were told that they are collecting 4-5 per cent from farmers," said Jaipal Reddy, President of Prataparudra Farmers' Federation, Warangal.

Assam rice output may touch 55 mt

GUWAHATI, MARCH 4:

Assam has taken measures for all-round economic development of the State , Governor J. B. Patnaik said on Monday .

Addressing the House on the opening day of its budget session here, Patnaik said the Gross State Domestic product was rising with a steady upward trend during the last few years with increase in revenue generation in the field of sales tax, excise and royalty on mineral resources.

The per capita debt was Rs 9,355 as on March 31, 2012, being the fourth lowest in the country and lowest among the Special Category States, the Governor said.

During 2012-13, the State is expected to achieve 7.5 per cent agricultural growth with the production of 55 lakh mt rice and 56 lakh mt foodgrains during the year, he said.

Spices Board alerts Customs to act against illegal cardamom imports



KOCHI, MARCH 4:

In a bid to arrest the entry of cardamom illegally into the country, the Spices Board has alerted the Commissioners of Customs at major ports to take action against illegal imports through land-locked and border countries, such as Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, etc.

Even though the imports, according to official records, are an insignificant 200 tonnes, the trade is of the view that more could have entered the domestic market illegally.

However, good export buying supported the market to remain nearly steady despite slack demand from upcountry markets at the auctions . Exporters were estimated to have bought 70 tonnes of above 7mm good colour capsules last week.

The individual auction average prices vacillated between Rs 680 and Rs 740 a kg on slack domestic demand. Arrivals showed a marginal rise following release of stocks held by growers of the second round of harvesting in October-November, market sources claimed.

Upcountry demand used to be slack usually during February and hence there is a decline in sales, trade sources said. Total arrivals last week stood at around 325 tonnes and of this about 315 tonnes of capsules were sold.

Good colour cardamom of above 7mm variety was fetching Rs 850-870 a kg. Exporters were said to be buying this variety at this rate, trade sources in Bodinayakannur told *Business Line*.

According to them, pepper from Guatemala is smuggled into India through some of the neighbouring countries and that has been impacting the price of the indigenous produce, they said. The bear operators are taking this opportunity to pull the prices down, they alleged. Such a phenomenon is attributed to the decline in the prices in recent days from above Rs 800 about three weeks ago.

Though the imports had taken place in the latter half of 2012 and early 2013, there was no perceptible decline in the auction average prices which was vacillating between Rs 696 and Rs 787 during June 2012 to January 2013. During the last year, the dip in average auction prices was noticed only in January 2012 at Rs 512, which was prior to imports. Even this drag down of price is not that alarming compared with the price in November 2011 which ruled at Rs 517. In fact, the price picked up in the month of January 2012 after a fall in price to Rs 506 in December 2011, it said.

The Board sources said the total import duty through authentic route is around 80.9 per cent and when this rate "is applied by the Customs on the tariff value, the price outcome is unlikely to upset the current auction average price". There is said to be moderate demand for good quality capsules having good colour and are bold above 7 mm. Exporters were actively covering this variety at the prevailing prices, he said.

At the Sunday auction conducted by the KCPMC, total arrivals stood at 68 tonnes as against 61.3 tonnes on the previous Sunday and the entire quantity was sold. The maximum price was at Rs 1,049 a kg and minimum was at Rs 482 a kg. Auction average price moved up slightly to Rs 706.84 from Rs 704.59 the previous Sunday, P.C. Punnoose of KCPMC told *Business Line*.

The weighted average price as on March 3 stood at Rs 765.85 (Rs 572.98).

Prices of graded varieties slipped slightly due weak domestic demand.

Prices in Rs/kg: AGEB 975-985; AGB 710-720; AGS 690-700 and AGS-1: 680-690.

Cotton growers begin loosening hold on stocks

RAJKOT, MARCH 4:

Enthused by the higher prices they are getting for their produce, cotton farmers have begun releasing their stocks in the market resulting in huge arrivals of the fibre.

As a result, cotton prices declined by Rs 500 a candy (of 356 kg), while kapas price slid by Rs 10-15 for 20 kg.

According to a cotton broker, farmers are now selling their produce more as they are getting good price. Moreover, demand at upper level has weakened after prices touched Rs 38,000 a candy last Friday.



In Gujarat, Sankar-6 variety decreased by Rs 400-500 to Rs 37,100-37,200. The V 797 A grade fetched Rs 29,000-29,500.

Kapas price declined by Rs 10-15 to Rs 930-950 for 20 kg in mandis and Kadi delivery kapas price stood at Rs 950-975.

About 40,000-41,000 bales (of 170 kg each) arrived in Gujarat against 35,000 bales last week. Total arrival of the fibre in the country stood at about 1 lakh bales.

Traders said that buyers were in a wait-and-watch mode after sharp rise in prices and subsequent correction. Arrivals also were reported slightly higher but still farmers' holding on stock is huge.

Rice gathers steam on fresh offtake



KARNAL, MARCH 4:

Some fresh buying pushed Sharbati rice prices upwards, while all other aromatic and non-basmati rice varieties managed to maintain their previous levels, on Monday.

Amit Chandna, Proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that due to moderate buying Sharbati rice varieties moved up while all other rice varieties ruled firm. Trade enquires continued to strengthen the market sentiment, he said. It is unlikely to see any major alteration this week and market may continue to rule around current levels, he said.

In the physical market, Sharbati (steam) went up by Rs 100 and quoted at Rs 4,900-5,000 a quintal while Sharbati (sela) was at Rs 4,800, up Rs 200.

Pusa-1121 (steam) sold at Rs 7,500 while Pusa-1121 (sela) quoted at Rs 6,600. Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 8,500. Duplicate basmati (steam) traded at Rs 6,400.PR-11 (sela) was at Rs 3,175 while PR-11 (Raw) quoted at Rs 2,850-2,900 a quintal. Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,400 while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,350.

For the brokens of Pusa-1121, Dubar quoted at Rs 3,250, Tibar sold at Rs 4,300 while Mongra was at Rs 2,540 a quintal.

PADDY ARRIVALS

About 500 bags of PR variety arrived and went for Rs 1,320 a quintal. Sharbati arrived with a stock of around 1,000 bags and quoted at Rs 2,130. About 2,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and fetched Rs 3,500 a quintal.

Pepper futures recover; spot falls on sale in Karnataka



KOCHI, MARCH 4:

Pepper futures recovered marginally on Monday, while spot price fell on reported selling pressure in Karnataka.

All active contracts on the exchange moved up.

There was good liquidation and sellers who had sold earlier bought back.

Though the turnover increased significantly, the total net open interest dropped.

Some sort of circular trading was also suspected, trade sources said.

On the spot, Karnataka dealers reportedly offered pepper at Rs 355 a kg for delivery anywhere in the country through organised transport and without any paper, trade sources said.

In the high ranges of Kerala, dealers are holding back following the decline in prices and at the same time they were not getting the material at lower levels, trade sources told *Business Line*.

Consequently, arrivals of fresh pepper were 17 tonnes on Monday and of this 15 tonnes were traded mostly afloat, they said.

March contracts on the NCDEX increased by Rs 190 a quintal to Rs 36,755.

April and May went up by Rs 305 and Rs 200 respectively to Rs 35,355 and Rs 34,370.

Total turnover soared by 1,513 tonnes to 2,535 tonnes.

Total open interest decreased by 145 tonnes to 3,117 tonnes.

Spot prices dropped by Rs 400 a quintal on reported selling pressure in Karnataka to close at Rs 36,000 (ungarbled) and Rs 37,500 (MG 1) .

Indian parity in the international market was at around \$7,100 a tonne (c&f) prompt and \$7,050 for March and for April \$6,900 (c&f) following weakening of the rupee against the dollar.

Soya oil slips on slack local demand



INDORE, MARCH 4: Despite strong foreign support, a bearish sentiment prevailed in the soya oil on slack local demand. In Indore mandis, soya refined ruled flat at Rs 650-55 for 10 kg on Monday. Similarly, soya solvent ruled stable at Rs 610-15. Demand in soya

oil continues to be weak even as its prices in the past one week have fallen by almost Rs 25.

Sluggish sentiment will likely to continue in soya oil in the coming days unless and until local demand comes up in the physical market, said a trader. In futures, however, the oil traded low on weak buying support with its March and April contracts on the NCDEX closing at Rs 677.10 for 10 kg (down 25 paise) and Rs 672.80 (down Re 1) respectively.Soya seeds ruled flat at Rs 3,200-3,300 a quintal amid subdued demand, even as arrivals declined to 75,000 bags. Farmers have retained soyabean as supply of chana and dollar chana in local mandis has gained momentum. Plant deliveries in soyabean also ruled stable at Rs 3,360-3,400.

On the other hand, DOC has risen by Rs 400-500 a quintal on improved demand. In the domestic market, soya DOC ruled at Rs 28,500, while it was Rs 30,100 on the port.

Soyabean futures showed a mixed trend with March and April contracts on the NCDEX closing at Rs 3,507 a quintal (down Rs 4) and Rs 3,278 (up Rs 9.50).

Turmeric loses colour on quality concerns

ERODE, MARCH 4: Despite poor arrivals, turmeric prices decreased for want of quality produce. "Some exporters and traders have received fresh orders from Bihar, Maharashtra, Delhi, Kolkata and some other places. But such orders were below the expectation of traders. Due to quality, buyers quoted lower price, but the hybrid variety ruled higher due to arrival of best quality. Buyers from Kolkata procured a good number of bags on Monday," said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Turmeric prices went down by Rs 400-500 a quintal in Erode and Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Marketing Society respectively. Even the new crop fetched about Rs 6,000 a quintal for the best variety. The price of the both the varieties decreased by Rs 300 in the Regulated Market Committee. Of the arrival of 3,800 bags, 1,867 bags were sold.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the new turmeric finger variety was sold at Rs 4,111-5,594 a quintal; the root variety Rs 3,955-5,609.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,800-7,896 and the root variety Rs 5,599-6,217. Of the 876 bags that arrived, only 312 found takers . At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,469-6,969 and the root variety Rs 5,409-6,010. Of the 410 bags on offer, 375 bags got sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety quoted was sold at Rs 5,001-6,529; the a quintal, root variety Rs 4,849-5,621 a quintal. All the 62 bags put up for sale of turmeric kept for sales were found takers. At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched was sold at Rs 5,272-6,312; the a quintal, root variety Rs 3,989-5,868 a quintal. All the 93 bags of turmeric found takerskept for sale were sold.

Global cues drag copra, coconut oil



ERODE, MARCH 4: Copra and coconut oil prices dropped sharply at the auctions in Erode district in line with the bearish global trend.

Only a limited number of oil crushers took part in the auction during the weekend. Though they purchased all the offerings, they quoted a lower price, as coconut oil price has decreased.

R.M. Palanisamy, a coconut oil trade r, said palm oil price has decreased and it reflected in the coconut oil price also.

A 15 kg loose pack of the coconut oil was sold at Rs 870, Rs 2-2.50 lower than the last week price.

He said till the arrival of new copra the price of coconut oil will remain the same and there is no possibility of coconut oil price increasing in the next two months.

He said that all oil crushers have ample stock of copra with them and also, farmers are holding copra stocks with them.

On Monday, copra was sold at Rs 4,375-4,400 a quintal. But only 75 quintals arrived and they were sold.

Spot rubber closes flat



The fine print The company plans to develop rubber plantations by leasing land on a long term basis. It will look at producing more of technically-specified rubber for latex manufacturers, glove manufacturers and sports goods manufacturers.

KOTTAYAM, MARCH 4: The mixed trend continued in spot rubber on Monday. According to sources, the market failed to improve on concerns over the end of the current financial year. There were no genuine buyers in the local scene to trigger an upside move in the commodity and it lost ground partially on buyer resistance. Sheet rubber finished unchanged at Rs 157 a kg, both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to traders. The transactions were dull.

In the futures market, the March series improved to Rs 156.75 (Rs 155.68), April Rs 161.50 (Rs 160.60), May Rs 165.19 (Rs 164.51) and June Rs 167.25 (Rs 166.50) a kg while the July series remained inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) closed firm at Rs 162.99 (Rs 160.61) a kg at Bangkok. March futures increased to ¥270.5 (Rs 158.65) in the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates Rs/kg were: RSS-4: 157.00 (157.00); RSS-5: 152.00 (153.00); Ungraded: 147.00 (147.00); ISNR 20: 153.00 (153.50) and Latex 60%: 100.00 (100.00).

Malaysia palm oil bracing for further correction

KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 4: The mood here in Kuala Lumpur for the annual palm and lauric oil price outlook is somewhat sombre, unlike in the recent years. The reasons are clear. Producers are bracing themselves for further downward correction in crude palm oil prices. Malaysia and Indonesia, world's largest producers and exporters, are already nursing tank-bursting levels of stock, some estimates placing it as high as 10 million tonnes.

Exports have turned sluggish because major destinations such as China, India and Pakistan are holding a huge inventory.

Record soyabean harvest ready in South America, mainly Brazil and Argentina, is exerting supply pressure which further exacerbates the weakness in the palm complex.

So, both demand side and supply side do not favour firm prices. Almost every serious trader is agreed that the next stop for crude palm oil is 2,000 Malaysian ringgit a tonne from the current level of ringgit 2,400. It is in this background that this year's palm oil price outlook will be discussed.

The theme for the year is: Price volatily - ride it, manage it. Organised by Bursa Malaysia, the conference has lined up a number of eminent speakers who will share their thoughts on the emerging palm oil market scenario, oleochemical market, biodiesel market and lauric oils market.

It will culminate in price outlook for 2013.

MALAYSIA PALM OIL RATES

Meanwhile, the benchmark May contract on the Bursa Malaysia Derivatives Exchange gained 1.8 per cent at 2,411 ringgit (\$776) a tonne on Monday. Prices traded in a tight range of 2,375-2,415 ringgit.

Vikram Global Commodities, Chennai, quoted Malaysian super palmolein at Rs 565 ex-Chennai.

Potato prices may crash as Bengal cold storages shut doors



KOLKATA, MARCH 4: Mamata Banerjee's no fare hike policy may lead to a crash in potato prices in West Bengal.

While potato production is estimated to be up by 12 per cent this season, nearly two-fifth of the 400-plus cold storages in the State have decided to keep their doors shut, without a hike in rentals.

The State had last raise the rentals for storage three years ago. This is despite a sharp 50 per cent rise in storage costs, especially for energy, during the period.

According to Ram Pada Pal, President, West Bengal Cold Storage Association, cold storages spend nearly Rs 150 for storing one quintal of potatoes during the storage season extending between mid-February to end-November.

The rental for storing potatoes is currently Rs 101 a quintal during the season.

West Bengal and Tripura are the only two States in the country where potato cold storage rents are controlled by the State Government.

Electricity tariffs have moved up by 50 per cent from Rs 30 a quintal about three years back to Rs 45 at present, while diesel prices have increased by 48 per cent from Rs 35 to Rs 52.

Labour costs have also gone up during this period, thereby, exerting pressure on profitability.

As many as 100 cold storages in the State are running at a cash loss and are unable to carry on operations this year, Pal said.

"The State Government had set up a committee to look into the issue. They have ensured they will look into the matter. We hope that the other storage units will soon commence operations," he said.

SUPPLY GLUT

West Bengal, the second largest potato producing State, is likely to produce 12 per cent more potatoes at nearly 95-98 lakh tonnes this year.

While higher production across the key producing States including West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, is likely to keep the demand subdued; delayed and poor loading into cold storages might lead to a supply glut exerting pressure on prices, said Patit Paban De, Member, West Bengal Cold Storage Association.

Harvesting, which begins around end December, gains steam by early February and is complete by March 15.

However, harvesting has been slightly delayed this year on account of late sowing following poor rains.

"This means that a majority of the crop will come into the market by the second week of March thereby creating a supply glut," said a potato trader in Singur-Ratanpur area.



91% of tea offerings sold at Coonoor sale

COONOOR, MARCH 4: New price records have been created at Sale No: 9 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) auctions when about 91 per cent of the year's lowest offer of 10.97 lakh kg was sold.

For the fourth consecutive week, Cross Hill Tea Factory, the oldest factory in Kotagiri region, topped the CTC market.

"Our broken orange pekoe fannings, auctioned by J. Thomas and Company, topped the market when Jai Tea Company bought it for Rs 197 a kg. This is the highest price fetched by this grade in all the auctions held so far this year. It is also the highest price fetched by this grade ever since manufacturing started in our factory 68 years ago", Cross Hill Operations Head Dinesh Raju told *Business Line*.

"Our three more leaf grades – broken orange pekoe small (Rs 182); broken orange pekoe (Rs 171) and broken pekoe (Rs 171) – and three dust grades – pekoe dust (Rs 176); red dust (Rs 173) and super red dust (Rs 165) – have also fetched high prices. In all, our seven grades have got Rs 165 and more per kg", he said.

Homedale Tea Factory tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, fetched the highest price of Rs 190/kg in CTC dust auction.

"Totally, our nine grades have fetched Rs 148 and morekg", Homedale Managing Partner Prasant Menon said.

Demand perks up for all varieties at Kochi tea sale



Deficit in output: A view of a tea garden. September harvest in North India is expected to be well below that of last year.

KOCHI, MARCH 4: A good demand perked up sales of almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction. In Cochin Sale No: 9, the quantity on offer in the CTC dust category was 9,51,802 kg. The market for good liquoring teas was dearer by Rs 2-5. Mediums were firm to dearer by Rs 2-3. However, plainer varieties were irregular and sometimes tended to ease.

The demand was fair for orthodox grades and the quantity on offer was 8,995 kg. The market for primaries remained steady, while secondaries were lower with many withdrawals. In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties fetched prices were Rs 108-116, RD grades Rs 110-152, SRD ruled at Rs 114-152 while SFD stood at Rs 116-152.

The leaf sale also witnessed a good demand and 1,13,000 kg were offered in the orthodox grades. The market for select best Nilgiri all varieties were fully firm to dearer. Medium, well-made, clean black, tippy grades and bolder brokens were steady to firm and sometimes dearer. Corresponding whole leaf witnessed strong feature and appreciated with longer margins of Rs 10-20. Of 87,000 kg on offer in the CTC leaf grades In the dust category, Injipara (Prm) SRD varieties fetched Rs 161 followed by Injipara (Prm) RD at Rs 156. In the leaf grades, Chamraj Green FOP (S) quoted Rs 386 followed by Pascoes Hyson Green tea at Rs 371.