

## **CM asks GAIL to realign pipeline and spare farm lands**

: The Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, on Monday, asked the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) to realign its Kochi-Bangalore liquid natural gas pipeline along the highway, instead of through farm lands, in seven districts in the State.

Announcing the decision of the government in reply to a special call attention motion tabled to highlight the plight of farmers of Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Namakkal, Salem, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts by members of the Opposition in the Assembly, the Chief Minister said the GAIL should forthwith give up its plan to take the pipeline along farm lands. It should initiate steps to lay it along highways, without affecting farmers' lands. The pits dug up for the purpose should be filled up and the lands handed over to the owners in their original state. The GAIL should remove all the pipes already laid in farm lands and provide due compensation to farmers and land owners for the losses suffered by them.

Describing how the government acted swiftly on coming to know of the farmers' concerns, Ms. Jayalalithaa said schemes should be for the people and not vice versa.

The Chief Secretary conducted a three-day public hearing in Chennai from March 6, in which 2, 428 farmers and land owners from 134 villages attended. Participants were of the unanimous view that the pipeline, in the present alignment, would adversely affect the livelihood of small and marginal farmers.

The right to use enjoyed by GAIL under the Petroleum and Minerals Pipeline Act, 1962, over 1,491 acres of land would mean inability to undertake cultivation in a major portion of their land and render future development impossible.

Land value would come down and banks would not come forward to advance loans to these lands. The Chief Minister said that GAIL could undertake realignment of the pipeline along highways and also take steps to provide liquid gas to Tamil Nadu. The government, she said, would initiate action to withdraw the cases filed against farmers in connection with the GAIL project.

The farmers also pointed out at the hearing that the GAIL had attempted to take the pipeline on its proposed route even in places where there was scope for an alternative, casting aside their views. It had chosen to go ahead with the project without getting their wholehearted consent or giving proper intimation to land owners. The pipeline would cause damage to their homes, poultry farms and

water sources. GAIL's order that trees with deep roots should not be raised in the area would affect their livelihood.

There was also a possibility of gas leak or major accidents around residential areas and educational institutions which were on the path of the pipeline.

The Chief Minister recalled how the GAIL had planned to lay gas pipeline to a distance of 310 km across seven districts in the State. But the compensation for farmers was only 10 per cent of the market rate of the acquired land. In its letter of March 8, 2013, GAIL had contended that traffic along the national highway would be affected if the pipeline were to take an alternative alignment. The National Highways Authority of India did not normally grant permission for laying of pipeline along highways. The pipeline could not be taken along the highway, taking into account future expansion. This would also involve installation of additional valves and stoppage of traffic for a distance of two kilometres whenever rocks were blasted.

However, the submissions of farmers and GAIL revealed that the public sector undertaking did not put forth any strong technical reasons for not laying the pipeline along highways, the Chief Minister said.

On the contrary, farmers had clearly stated how their livelihood would be affected by the present alignment.

Speaking for the motion, the CPI (M) MLA, P. Dillibabu, said neighbouring States like Karnataka and Kerala allowed only minimum damage to farm lands and the

pipeline was planned along highways. He also thanked the Chief Minister for protecting the interests of farmers.

## **Farmers welcome announcement on GAIL pipeline**

Farmers and political parties across West Zone responded with expressions of appreciation and thanks following Chief Minister Jayalalithaa's announcement on asking Gas Authority of India (GAIL) to stop pipeline-laying work immediately and try to carry out the project without affecting the livelihood of farmers.

GAIL proposed to lay pipelines for 310 km and 20 metre width through the Western districts of Tamil Nadu for its pipeline project from Kochi to Bengaluru.

Farmers objected saying it would halt irrigation in several thousand acres of land. The Chief Minister, after consultations, ordered a public hearing.

Responding to a calling attention motion on the floor of the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly, the Chief Minister listed the setbacks that the scheme would cause to the farmers and announced decisions protecting the interests of the farmers.

G.K. Nagaraj, State General Secretary of Kongu Nadu Munnetra Kazhagam (KNMK) who was also part of the farmers' livelihood protection Committee thanked the

Chief Minister for taking note of the opposition by farmers and for having come to their rescue.

He also thanked the Coimbatore MP P.R. Natarajan for his efforts.

State General Secretary of the Kongu Nadu Desiya Makkal Katchi E.R. Easwaran said that the Government had acted positively after the public hearing.

**Namakkal:** Farmers of Thokavadi lighted fireworks and distributed sweets at Four Roads junction. Revenue officials said that GAIL had initiated the pipeline work through agricultural lands owned by 351 farmers in various villages.

Farmer S. Kanagaraj said but for CM's intervention it would have been an end for farming and livelihood of the farmers.

**Erode:** "The Chief Minister has reflected the opinions of the farming community," Association for Sustainable Agriculture Convener K.V. Ponnaiyan said. GAIL should lay the pipelines along the highways as it involved only an additional 13 km, he added.

**Tirupur:** P. Mohan, the All India Kissan Sabha District President, said that the State Government's decision was the result of the crusades carried out by farmers highlighting their genuine grievances.

"Even in the new alignment suggested by the government of laying the pipelines alongside the highways,

compensation should be given at the market rate in case any of the farmers' landholdings lying close to the roads have to be used," he added.

Compensation to the tune of Rs. 19 lakh was distributed to as many as 56 persons as compensation for using the land and to offset the losses for the crops/ trees displaced for laying the pipelines.

**Salem:** District unit of Tamilaga Vivasayigal Livelihood Protection Committee in charge V. Manikandan said that farmers who were upset over the Petroleum Minister's remark are now a relieved lot because of the announcement by the Chief Minister.

**Krishnagiri and Dharmapuri:** K.M. Ramagoundar, General Secretary of the Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam said that it was a 'right and remarkable decision' taken by the State Government at the right time to protect the interest of farmers.

He also said that the same yardstick should be followed in acquiring land for development projects by the Central projects in the State.

## **Farmers suffer the most**

With rural areas of the district suffering longer hours of power cut compared to the city, farming activity is hit hard.

## **Borewells**

Three phase power supply is available for just three hours a day. There is no power for at least 12 hours and for the remaining hours only two phase supply is available.

Deficient rainfall in the district has already resulted in ground water level depleting. Farmers have to use only the borewells now.

Some of them pump water when three phase supply is available and use the water throughout the day. Many others operate the pumpset with two phase supply and this damage the pumpset.

Most of the farmers cannot afford to purchase solar-powered pumpsets as it is expensive, says Valukkuparai Balu, Coimbatore District president of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangham.

Uninterrupted Power Supply (UPS) system dealers say that with longer hours of power cut, enquiry from rural areas for UPS systems is increasing.

However, the demand is for more cost-effective systems. Since they already have tiled roof, they want to install it on the roof, say a couple of dealers in the city.

The consumers need power supply to charge the UPS systems.

Since power supply is available only for a short while, many of them ask about solar-powered systems, they say. Availability of cost-effective systems and better awareness

will lead to higher sales of the systems in rural areas, the dealers add.

## **Farmers complain about power supply**

Farmers from across the taluk laid siege to the office of the Chamundeshwari Electricity Supply Corporation here on Monday, demanding uninterrupted power supply to their villages.

Sampalli, B. Hosahalli, Beeragowdana Halli and some surrounding villages were just 2 km from the city, but farmers were not getting continuous power supply to run their pump sets, the village residents said.

### **‘Students hit’**

Besides, the erratic power supply was affecting students preparing for annual examinations, they added.

They demanded uninterrupted power for at least eight hours a day to operate their irrigation pump sets.

The protesters submitted a memorandum to an official.



# District panchayat to upgrade its farms in coming fiscal

[Best deal on Tata Nano](#) - Get the Tata Nano at an EMI of Rs. 8,333 monthly @ 0% interest. Hurry! [Tatanano.com/Nano-Special-Edition](http://Tatanano.com/Nano-Special-Edition)

[Ads by Google](#)

## STAFF REPORTER

[SHARE](#) · [PRINT](#) · [T+](#)

The district panchayat will launch a series of projects to strengthen the functioning of its farms during the financial year 2013-14.

A panchayat official said here on Monday that an action plan would look into the scope of promoting farm tourism and the production of high-yielding varieties of plants and seeds.

The farms are at Koothali, Perambra, Thikkodi and Puthuppadi. He said the District Agriculture Farm at Koothali would be promoted as the main farm tourism destination.

District panchayat authorities said Rs. 3.22 crore would be spent on upgrading facilities in the farms.

The amount would be mainly utilised to complete farm renovation and buy machinery.

The Thikkodi farm would be granted Rs. 5 lakh to help produce high-yielding dwarf varieties of coconut saplings. This would support a pilot project of the panchayat to promote the production of Neera through cooperative societies.

A sum has been earmarked in the latest Budget to train farmers and supply them equipment at a reasonable cost.

The panchayat will encourage and aid farm tours.

## **Farmers protest outside market yard**

Chilli farmers staged a protest in front of the market yard here on Monday following a dispute with some traders and workers over alleged irregularities in measuring the weight of stocks.

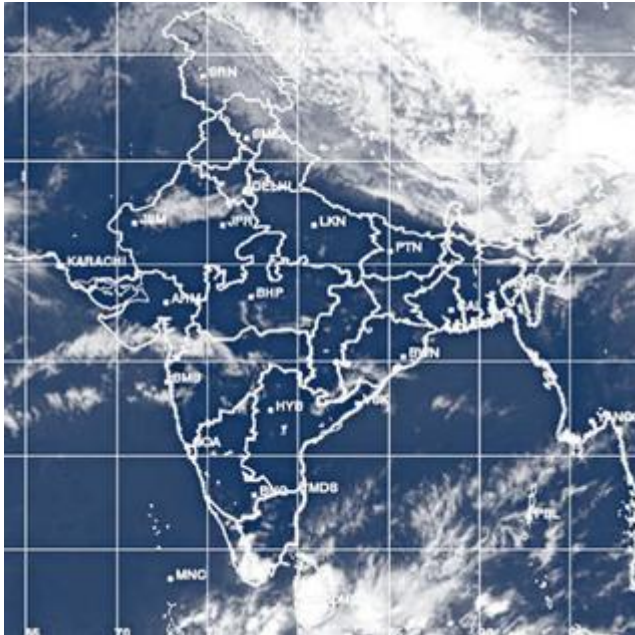
Trouble started after a group of farmers from Prakasam district entered into an argument with traders engaged by them alleging that sizable quantities of their produce are being taken out for sampling by unknown persons.

While heated arguments ensued, the farmers suspected that a few women workers have been doing the mischief. They quickly denied the charges levelled on them.

The verbal duel eventually resulted in fisticuffs following which the farmers staged a demonstration on the State highway abutting the market yard holding up the traffic for some time.

As the situation appeared to be deteriorating, police entered the scene and pacified the agitating farmers and also warned against the involvement of unauthorised persons in activities in the yard.

## Weather



### **ANDHRA PRADESH**

Anantapur	3921 0 0
Arogyavaram	3717 0 1
Bapatla	3321 0 0
Calingapatnam	33230 1
Gannavaram	35220 0
Hanamkonda	3921 0 0
Hyderabad AP	37250 0
Kakinada	33230 0
Kavali	33240 0
Kurnool	39250 0
Mahabubnagar	39230 0
Machilipatnam	33220 0

Nandyal	38230 0
Narasapur	34230 0
Nellore	35250 2
Nizamabad	36230 1
Ongole	34240 0
Ramagundam	35250 0
Tirupathi AP	37240 90
Tuni	35230 0
Vizag AP	36240 0
Vizag	31 240 3
<b>KARNATAKA</b>	
Agumbe	3516 0 13
Bangalore AP	3419 0 tr
Bangalore	3521 0 1
Belgaum AP	3519 0 4
Bellary	39230 0
Bijapur	3721 0 1
Chitradurga	3621 0 7
Chickmagalur	31 17 0 21
Chintamani	— — —
Gadag	3721 0 7
Gulbarga	39250 0
Hassan	3321 0 39
Honavar	34240 0
Karwar	35240 0
Madikeri	3016 0 110
Mangalore AP	34240 0
Mysore	3521 0 4
Mandya	37220 4
Panambur	34250 26
Raichur	39240 0

Shirali	34240 0
---------	---------

## **KERALA**

Alappuzha	33260 53
-----------	----------

Kannur	34260 11
--------	----------

Kochi AP	34231132
----------	----------

Kottayam	36240 65
----------	----------

Kozhikode	35249 25
-----------	----------

Punalur	37250 6
---------	---------

Thiruvanantha	
---------------	--

-puram AP	34250 25
-----------	----------

Thiruvanantha	
---------------	--

-puram City	35250 75
-------------	----------

Vellanikkara	38240 15
--------------	----------

## **TAMIL NADU**

Adiramapattinam	34250 100
-----------------	-----------

Coimbatore AP	36250 2
---------------	---------

Coonoor	23140 126
---------	-----------

Cuddalore	33250 73
-----------	----------

Chennai AP	34240 32
------------	----------

Chennai	33250 12
---------	----------

Dharmapuri	36210 0
------------	---------

Kanyakumari	32260 27
-------------	----------

Karaikal	32260 10
----------	----------

Kodaikanal	21107 57
------------	----------

Madurai AP	37260 18
------------	----------

Nagapattinam	33260 27
--------------	----------

Palayamkottai	36260 71
---------------	----------

Pamban	3327 tr 83
--------	------------

Parangipettai	33260 40
---------------	----------

Puducherry	33250 8
------------	---------

Salem	38240 0
-------	---------

Thanjavur	35 280 33
Tiruchi AP	37 260 15
Tirupattur	38 200 1
Tondi	32 270 56
Tuticorin	34 242 42
Ooty	239 0 11
Valparai	31 15 0 68
Vellore	38 21 0 45

### **LAKSHADWEEP**

Amini Divi	35 260 1
Minicoy	33 250 69
Kavarathi	35 270 64

### **OTHER STATIONS**

Kolkata (Alipore)	35 250 0
Mumbai	31 250 0
New Delhi	34 180 1

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall in mm since March 1, 2013.

## **DRY WEATHER**

**IN A.P.**

**CHENNAI:** Isolated rainfall occurred over south Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Dry weather prevailed over Andhra Pradesh, north Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep and Karnataka.

On Sunday, the maximum temperature fell appreciably at one or two places over Telangana, fell at one or two places over rest Andhra Pradesh, rose at one or two places over

coastal Karnataka and changed little elsewhere over the region.

They were appreciably above normal at one or two places over north interior Tamil Nadu, above normal at a few places over Telangana, rest north Tamil Nadu, rest south Kerala, appreciably below normal at a few places over Rayalaseema, at one or two places over south coastal Andhra Pradesh, south Kerala, below normal at a few places over rest coastal Andhra Pradesh, at one or two places over north interior Karnataka, north Kerala and remained normal over the rest of the region.

**Forecast (valid till Wednesday morning):** Rain would occur at a few places over south Kerala. Isolated rain may occur over south Tamil Nadu, north interior Tamil Nadu, north Kerala and Lakshadweep. Mainly dry weather will prevail over north coastal T.N., Puducherry, A.P. and Karnataka.

## **Water level**

: Water level in the Papanasam dam on Monday stood at 79.95 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 229.63 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 90.20 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 47 cusecs and 430 cusecs is discharged.

### **Nagercoil**

Water level in the Pechipparai dam stood at 7.60 feet, 29.25 feet in Perunchani, 4.30 feet in Chittar I, 4.39 feet in Chittar II and 3.70 feet in the Poigai dam.

Water level in the Periyar dam was 112.80 feet with an inflow of 100 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs on Monday. The water level in Vaigai dam was 45.25 feet with an inflow of 4 cusecs and discharge of 60 cusecs. Sothuparai recorded 10 mm rainfall and Kodaikanal 1 mm rainfall respectively.



## Weather Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Sunny

**Tuesday, Mar 26**

**Max Min**

32° | 24°

**Rain:** 0

**Sunrise:** 06:09

**Humidity:** 70

**Sunset:** 06:20

**Wind:** normal

**Barometer:** 1010

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly  
Cloudy

**Wednesday, Mar**

**27**

**Max Min**

34° | 25°

### Extended Forecast for a week

**Thursday**  
**Mar 28**



35° | 25°

Partly Cloudy

**Friday**  
**Mar 29**



33° | 25°

Overcast

**Saturday**  
**Mar 30**



35° | 25°

Cloudy

**Sunday**  
**Mar 31**



35° | 27°

Cloudy

**Monday**  
**Apr 1**



34° | 27°

Overcast



# SC seeks govt's view on charging simple interest on farm loans

NEW DELHI: After the suicide of 2.7 lakh farmers, many of them sucked into a desperate debt trap, the [Supreme Court](#) has sought views of the Union ministries of finance and agriculture on a PIL demanding change in banking rules to charge simple interest on [farm loans](#) and not to imprison defaulting farmers.

The PIL by five individuals said harsh repayment schedules and compound interest charged on the loan amount forced farmers, engaged in increasingly non-remunerative agricultural activity, into a vicious web of loans and debts.

Appearing for the petitioners, advocate Sanjay Parikh contended before a bench of Justices R M Lodha, J Chelameswar and Madan B Lokur that policy makers had continuously and systematically neglected the agricultural sector and ensured that "the occupation of agriculture loses all dignity and respect, becomes

unviable and unsustainable, leaving the farmer with no option but to seek ways, including suicide, to get out of his plight".

The bench issued notices to the ministries of finance, agriculture and law and justice, Planning Commission, Reserve Bank of India and Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices and asked the respondents to file their replies within 10 weeks.

Seeking scrapping of Section 21-A of Banking Regulation Act, 1949, the petitioners said this provision had turned banking institutions into money-lenders. They requested the court to direct the Centre as well as the respondents "not to charge compound interest on loans advanced for agricultural purposes and to see that the laws providing for imprisonment of defaulting farmers are abrogated".

The petition made an interesting analysis to demonstrate to the court how the policies had failed to make agriculture a viable option in a country with an agrarian economy. "In the year 1925, the price of 10 grams of gold was almost equal to one quintal of wheat. The gold price has multiplied 1,570 times in the past 85 years whereas the price of wheat has multiplied only 80 times in the corresponding period," the PIL said.

The PIL also drew the court's attention to marginalization of agricultural labour force through payment of low wages even as major agri-business houses maximized their profits.

"More than 56% of the population is employed in agriculture but its GDP contribution is being reduced drastically with every passing year, so much so that according to Vision 2020, it has to be brought to the level of 6% only," it said.

The petition requested the court to "direct the Union government to constitute a commission to report on the wages of agricultural labourers as well as for recommending means and measures to improve their living standards".

---

 **The Indian EXPRESS**

## Subsidies in fact

---

*There is much work to be done before farm subsidies can be lowered*

Contrary to the popular belief that farmers are a pampered lot in India, they comprise about 50 per cent of the workforce and yet account for less than 14 per cent of GDP. The gains from 20 years of liberalisation have eluded them and the old inequalities remain. Successive governments have introduced policies that treat only the effects of such deep-rooted problems, not the problems themselves.

Farm subsidies polarise opinion: those that influence policy want to do away with them altogether, while millions of farmers find them grossly inadequate. Nowhere in the world is farming economically viable without subsidies, and India is no exception. Farm subsidies come in various forms. In 2009, the EU gave \$988 per hectare as farm subsidy and the US gave \$190, compared to a mere \$149 in India. Per capita subsidies worked out to be \$239 in the EU and \$102 in the US. In India, they were a meagre \$21.

Policymakers speak of fertilisers being overused in India. Yet, apart from Punjab, Haryana and a few scattered regions of the country, fertiliser use is much lower than the recommended optimum level. Compare India's fertiliser use with that of other countries. In

2010, China used 400 kilogrammes per hectare of NPK to produce 5,399 kg per hectare of foodgrain. In the same year, Indian used only 166 kg per hectare of NPK to produce 2,237 kg per hectare of foodgrain. Bangladesh, meanwhile, used 224 kg per hectare and Pakistan used 185 kg.

India is faced with the herculean task of doubling food production, even with the land-to-man ratio falling from 0.34 in 1951 to 0.15 in 2009. To double production and achieve the targeted 4 per cent agriculture growth rate, fertiliser consumption needs to be increased by 3 per cent every year. A reduction in farm subsidies will lead to a fall in consumption and complete removal will cause an 18 per cent drop in farm production.

The primary objective of the pricing policy for fertilisers is to reduce the subsidy, rather than to promote the balanced use of fertilisers. In 2010, the subsidy for nutrient-based fertilisers was introduced, even as the price of potash rose by nearly four times and phosphate by about two-and-a-half times. The price of urea remained stagnant. The resulting nutrient imbalance is destroying soils, causing pest infestations

and lowering yields, among other problems. The imbalance in fertiliser use cannot be addressed by reducing the use of some nutrients. It needs to be restored by increasing certain nutrients, which are not being used in their prescribed quantities. This must also be supported by better outreach to farmers and by giving them access to better technology.

Farm subsidies definitely need to be reworked. But we cannot do away with subsidies, or make fertilisers more expensive, just because there is no unanimity on how to go about it. An increase in fertiliser prices must be offset by an increase in foodgrain prices for farmers. Most are small and marginal farmers. Subsidy distribution could be rendered more equitable by making it inversely proportional to the size of the holding. Curious solutions have been suggested instead. It has been suggested, for instead, that small farmers buy inputs that they can ill afford and be compensated during or after procurement. This will sink farmers further into the quagmire of debt and poverty.

The sharp depreciation of the rupee has compounded the problem of subsidies. For seven months now, no

subsidy has been released to the fertiliser industry, which is likely to face a shortfall of Rs 30,000 crore because of inadequate budget provisions this year. Hostile policies have also meant that no major fertiliser plants have come up in the last 13 years. In 2011, we imported 27 per cent of our urea requirements. The average subsidy release for imported urea was Rs 21,939 per metric tonne, while on indigenous urea, it was only Rs 6,663 per metric tonne. Needless to say, imported fertilisers prove to be more lucrative for those middlemen who give and receive kickbacks.

Subsidies are essential for the survival of farmers. Farming, India's largest private sector activity, is unprofitable for most. First change that reality, fulfil past promises, create alternative jobs and help develop skills. Only then can farm subsidies be lowered. Farm subsidies are not charity or wasted expenditure, as many would want us to believe. They help increase productivity, generate employment on the farms, ensure low food prices and stanch the flow of rural population into towns and cities. It is worrying that the current misconceptions do not rise from ignorance

among policymakers. Most of them recognise the ground realities but choose not to act.

## New force cracks down on farmers for water theft

---



As the newly-formed Narmada Battalion increases vigil at the Narmada dam site and along the main canal route, farmers from villages adjoining the dam site have started feeling the heat.

The dam authorities have seized over 30 pumping sets in the last few weeks from farmers allegedly found lifting water illegally from the canal using pumping sets.

Officials of the Sardar Sarovar Narmada Nigam Limited (SSNNL) at Kevadia Colony in Narmada district said the errant farmers had been warned that such an act would amount to theft and they would be penalised for lifting water from the canal.



A senior SSNNL official said the Narmada Battalion, assigned the security of the dam site and canal from February 1 this year, has so far identified over 30 cases where farmers were using generator sets to draw water from main canal along the 33-kilometre stretch from the dam site in Narmada.

"We have identified vulnerable points where to deploy Narmada Battalion personnel," the official said.

Farmers say they use generator sets to draw water from the canal because they have no other source of water to irrigate their farms, where they have sown maize and cotton.

"Ours is the first village from Narmada dam site towards canal route, but unfortunately our land does not get canal water because the minor canal running along our village does not carry water due to technical fault. Government should first rectify technical fault so we could get canal water," said Jasang Tadvī, a farmer from Bhumalia, the village nearest to the dam site.

Ishwarbhai Tadvī of Aamalda village, also situated near the dam site, has similar grouse. "There is no system of irrigation in our village, despite the main canal

running not very far from our fields. Government should first ensure we get water to irrigate before penalising us like this," he said.

The Narmada Battalion, maintained by the SSNNL, was formed with personnel drawn from the State Reserve Police. It was deployed at the dam site and along the canal route on February 1. Around 200 personnel are currently keeping vigil on identified vulnerable points along the canal route to prevent water theft, which will gradually go up to over 1,000, the SSNNL official said.

The farmers are penalised for stealing water from canal under the state government's Gujarat Irrigation Act 1879, which is soon likely to be replaced by the proposed Gujarat Irrigation and Drainage Bill, 2013, tabled in state Assembly during the ongoing budget session.

The Bill prescribes penal action against farmers drawing canal or underground water without licence, including three-month imprisonment and fine up to Rs 5,000.

## **Narmada Battalion**

Narmada Battalion was formed by the SSNNL to guard Narmada dam site and 458-kilometre-long main canal route with personnel drawn from State Reserve Police. Apart from dam, the Battalion also keeps vigil on farmers drawing water illegally from canal. It is headquartered at Kevadia Colony in Narmada district and is currently deployed along the main canal route near Narmada dam, Dhrangadhra in Surendranagar district and Dhandhuka in Ahmedabad.

---

**Business Standard** <sup>beta</sup>

## When farmers meet scientists

**A new concept will bring them together to develop new technologies**



A disconnect between agricultural scientists and farmers often leads to the development of technologies that find few takers despite

appearing highly promising. This divide results in many critical operational problems faced by farmers being unaddressed. But the losers in this game are not farmers alone. Farm scientists are left frustrated at their efforts going unrewarded or under-rewarded.

However, neither scientists nor research managers have been unaware of the need for closer interaction with farmers.

Conventionally, extension agencies, which are controlled largely by state governments, are supposed to serve as the vital two-way link between agricultural researchers and farmers. But they have failed to play this role effectively. Therefore, targeted strategies have been called to ensure a closer interface between them.

Fortunately, some well-thought-out and tactical initiatives have been taken in the past in this direction. Some of these have served useful purposes, as well. The most notable were the Lab-to-Land programme (1979), the Operational Research Programme (1974) and the Institute Village Linkage Programme (1995). Besides, the World Bank-supported National Agricultural Innovation Programme (2006) also aimed - among other objectives - at encouraging collaborative research to address issues concerning the entire value chain from farm to fork. These programmes kept various stakeholders, including producers and consumers, in the loop while conducting research, though they fell short of making them partners in the process.

With this end in view, a new concept of Farmer-FIRST has been conceived by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), which oversees the entire National Agricultural Research System (NARS), for trying out in the Twelfth Plan. This initiative, apart from retaining the positive features of the previous programmes, will

take the process of the scientist-farmer interaction forward to involve the latter in every stage of technology development - from planning and execution to adoption and promotion of research project outcomes. Such an association will allow farmers to contribute their traditional knowledge and experience to the designing and implementation of research and development projects. This will essentially mean a distinct shift from the conventional top-down approach, which involved developing technologies in research institutes and then asking farmers to adopt them, to bottom-up planning and execution of research programmes.

The logic behind this concept seems sound. Farmers usually face numerous problems in their day-to-day farm chores, for which they do not have scientific solutions. The Farmer-FIRST approach will provide an opportunity for them to work hand in hand with scientists to find these remedies. Since farmers know the local conditions, the state of natural resources (such as land and water) and the technology-adoption capacity of the local people, they can chip in with useful inputs to ensure that the final outcome is relevant and practical.

Significantly, the Farmer-FIRST programme will not be confined to crop cultivators. It will also cover livestock farmers, fishers and others engaged in activities like seed production, bee-keeping, mushroom farming, earthworm-based vermicomposting, value-addition of farm produce and the like. All farm research bodies under NARS will follow this concept. These include 97 ICAR research institutes, 22 state agricultural universities, one central agricultural university, 632 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) and numerous regional centres of research institutes and farm varsities.

Each organisation will rope in 1,000 farm families from two to four villages. Small and marginal farmers, of course, will be prioritised, since they generally face daunting handicaps and are in greater need of workable and cost-effective solutions to their problems. Each initiative may further be split into sub-projects on different activities, such as crop farming, horticulture, dairying, poultry, fisheries, and others. The results of these initiatives will be shared with not only the local stakeholders, but also with the states' extension agencies, KVKs, voluntary organisations and others, for wider dissemination.

The Farmer-FIRST plan, thus, seems prima facie well-founded and capable of generating technologies that are practical and economically affordable for the common farmer. If implemented successfully and true to its spirit, it can be expected to quicken the pace of agricultural development and raise farmers' income by enhancing productivity with reduced costs.

## Agri & processed food export to set record

**Commerce ministry takes initiatives to promote agri products in European countries for better realisation**

Agricultural and processed food exports from India are likely to set a record this financial year, despite unfavourable global economic sentiment.

These exports had already surpassed last year's annual figure in the first 10 months of the current financial year, witnessing a strong demand for India's ready-to-eat and raw food products from foreign markets. Data compiled by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) showed India's agri and processed foods exports shot up 63 per cent to set a record at Rs 101,504 crore in the first 10 months of 2012-13, as compared to Rs 62,244 crore in the corresponding period of last year.

"Overall exports of agri and processed foods might surpass Rs 125,000 crore by the end of this financial year," said a senior Apeda official.



Cereals constituted a little over 40 per cent of India's overall shipment in this sector. Commodities such as dried and preserved vegetables, mango pulp and pulses also recorded a sharp jump.

Dietmar Eiden, vice-president (trade fair management) at Koelnmesse GmbH, the organiser of the world's largest food and beverage exhibition, the Anuga International Fair, said: "An

unfavourable global economic climate is unlikely to hurt consumer demand for food and agri products. That's the reason we have got overwhelming response from Indian food and agri exporters, who have already set their foothold in European countries and want to strengthen their presence."

The commerce ministry took initiatives to promote India's agri and processed food products in European countries in recent years, boosting India's significance in Anuga events. Exports of these products haven't been hit by the unfavourable global economic sentiment. As a result, these exports has risen ten-fold in four years, from Rs 11,178 crore in 2009-10.

In Europe, Germany continues to remain a major destination for rice products, coffee, dried and preserved vegetables and poultry products. America is a major importer of India's cereal preparations, guar gum, cocoa products, natural honey and milled products. Asian countries are also major export destinations for a number of agri products.

<b>AGRI &amp; PROCESSED FOOD EXPORTS</b>				(₹ crore)
Products	2011-12	2012-13	Chg (%)	
Floriculture	508.09	637.75	25.52	■
Fruits and vegetables	4,436.77	4,748.91	7.04	■
Processed fruits and veg	3,062.12	3,429.38	11.99	■
Animal products	12,286.11	16,137.20	31.35	■
Other processed foods	18,313.75	35,475.91	93.71	■
Cereals	23,637.19	41,075.25	73.77	■
<b>Total</b>	<b>62,244.04</b>	<b>101,504.39</b>	<b>63.07</b>	■

Source : Apeda, Period for April -January



# Assam tea industry asks for irrigation scheme

**The industry is faced with a drought-like weather condition, which is turning from bad to worse with each passing year**



Gradual change in the climatic conditions of the region, which is shifting slowly towards a rainless weather condition, is making "survival tough" for the Assam tea industry. Of late, at the start of every production season, the industry is faced with a drought-like weather condition, which is turning from bad to worse with each passing year. The tea industry now wants the government to come up with a massive and affordable irrigation scheme for all tea gardens of Assam so as to help the gardens beat the challenge of climatic change.

Generally, tea production in Assam picks up from the month of April, but of late harsh weather condition in the preceding months February and March has been delaying crop production in many tea gardens. Irrigation, which was something unnecessary and unimaginable few years back, has now become utmost essential for tea gardens across the state, particularly in Brahmaputra Valley, the main tea producing region of Assam. Though big gardens,

which are mainly owned by corporate houses, survive the onslaught of weather as they have their own irrigation facilities, the smaller and medium sized ones are face the heat and their production takes a beating.

## Sugar trades up 0.2% on demand hopes

**Summer season increased hopes of spot market improvement**



Sugar futures for May rose by Rs 6, or 0.20% to Rs 2,986 per quintal in 24,530 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the April contract gained Rs 5, or 0.17% to Rs 2944 per quintal in 30,270 lots.

Prices gained as speculators created fresh positions, driven by hopes of improvement in spot market demand.

Summer season increased the hopes of spot market improvement.

# Jeera softens 0.3% on supply pressure



Jeera futures for April declined by Rs 37.50, or 0.29% to Rs 13,015 per quintal with 10,188 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the May contract also traded lower by Rs 25, or 0.19% to Rs 13,210 per quintal in 6,360 lots.

Prices softened as speculators trimmed their positions, triggered by rising supplies from the new season crop at spot market against subdued demand.

Hopes of higher output this season also put pressure on jeera.

# Turmeric down 0.7% on increased supplies

**Adequate stocks affected the turmeric futures trade**



Turmeric futures for May fell by Rs 46, or 0.69% to Rs 6,662 per quintal in 18,630 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the April contract lost Rs 40, or 0.60% to Rs 6,574 per quintal in 19,055 lots.

Prices went down as speculators reduced their holdings on increased supplies at spot market against sluggish demand.

---

## THE HINDU Business Line

### **AP asserts its right on seed price, royalty payouts**

**Hyderabad, March 25:** The Andhra Pradesh Government has reasserted its right on the pricing of seed and deciding the royalty component. In a first-of-its-kind bill in the country, the State Government has proposed to bring in key changes in the way seed business is carried out.

It also will get powers to withdraw or cancel permission for genetic technologies if they pose a danger to public security.

A copy of the bill has been put online for feedback from various stakeholders.

The Government plans to move the Bill in the Assembly in the next three weeks. While claiming the right for regulation of retail price of the seed and of the royalty component (the fee seed companies pay to firms such as Mahyco-Monsanto for using their genetic technology in cotton), the Government said it could review the price from time to time to consider increased cost of production.

The Bill calls for setting up of State Seed Committee to implement the Act.

Headed by a chairperson, it will have representatives from the farmers' associations and the seed industry.

It will take a call on issues related to seed production, export and import of seeds, standards and seed registration.

The Act would make it mandatory that all firms register their varieties with the State Register of Seeds, indicating all specifications.

Farmers, however, are spared.

They need not enlist their backyard varieties. The local administration will do that for them.

However, it won't allow registration of some varieties and genetic technologies to protect 'public order' and human,

plant and animal life; or to avoid serious harm to the environment.

It also mandates that seed producers, seed processing units and horticulture nurseries to register themselves with the authority.

They are required to submit reports periodically on quality of the output. It also addresses a long-pending demand of seed growers – to honour the agreements with the seed companies.

So far, payments to growers are by and large arbitrary.

### **Compensation**

The Act comes out with an interesting clause on the performance of the seed.

All packets should indicate the expected performance of such seed under given conditions. Farmers can claim compensation if seeds fail to live up to the claim.

## **Cabinet panel to take up sugar decontrol on March 28**

**Chennai, March 25:** The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs will take up the issue of sugar decontrol during its meeting on Thursday, according to Union Minister of State for Food and Consumer Affairs K.V. Thomas.

“The issue is before the Cabinet Committee on Economic affairs. We hope it will be approved in Thursday’s meeting,” Thomas said, addressing a group of journalists from *The Hindu* and *Business Line*.



*K.V. Thomas, Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, addressing The Hindu group of journalists, in Chennai on Monday. — Bijoy Ghosh*

The C. Rangarajan committee, which went into the issue of decontrol, had come up with eight important recommendations and the Food Ministry had identified three of them as important.

One of the key recommendations was to find a mechanism to allow States buy the sugar needed for the public distribution system and then give them the compensation for subsidising the consumer.

“The States burden can be reduced through compensation either by release money from the Sugar Development Fund or increasing excise duty,” he said. The second issue was on mechanism through which release of sugar in the open market was controlled by the Centre.

“We have decided to discontinue the release mechanism. But if prices go up in the open market and supply through the public distribution system is affected, we will intervene,” Thomas said.

The third recommendation was doing away with the mandatory jute packaging and the Government has decided to go by the Rangarajan panel’s suggestions.

To a question on the Finance Ministry’s reservation to remove curbs in the sugar sector, the Minister said that his Ministry had cleared the misgivings and it would have no problem in clearing the decontrol proposal.

Thomas said that the Government wanted to strengthen the farm sector by making them adopting modernisation.

“At the same time, we want supply of sugar to continue through the public distribution system,” he said.

C. Rangarajan, Chairman of the Prime Minister’s Economic Advisory Committee, was also studying the issues relating to the procurement of foodgrains by the Food Corporation of India.

“Last year, we procured 82 million tonnes of foodgrains. The problem is that we have to pay taxes imposed by States for the procurement and then are forced to sell to the private trade at a subsidised price. The Rangarajan panel is going into issue and hopefully will come out with a solution,” he said.

Thomas said foodgrains wastage has been brought down to 0.03 per cent of the production from 2.5 per cent and the Food Corporation of India was being asked to follow a policy of first getting out grains that had come into warehouses first.



Asked about government-to-government export deals on wheat, the minister said there were problems in getting the deals done.

First, Iran and then Egypt held talks with the government to buy wheat.

“This year, Indian wheat has been accepted globally and we have exported huge quantities. We have the capacity to export more than the current five lakh tonnes a month but we lack infrastructure,” Thomas said.

On constructing silos to store foodgrains for a longer period of time, he said most of the projects were only on paper and a few would take off in the next 3-4 months.

## **Madhya Pradesh pepper traders move court against NCDEX**

**Mumbai, March 25:** Kalimirch (black pepper) Vyapari Association, a Madhya Pradesh-based traders’ body, has filed a writ petition in Madhya Pradesh High Court against the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, National Securities Depository, Central Depository Service and Ministry of Consumer Affairs for defaulting on pepper delivery for contracts which expired on January 5.

The petition (a copy available with Business Line) was filed by a group of 30 members last Monday and was

admitted for hearing on March 21. The hearing is posted for April 2.

Vijay Kumar, Chief Business Officer, NCDEX, said that the exchange had not received the petition copy so far and would be able to decide on the future course of action only after going through the details.

The 30 members had bought 6,935 tonnes of pepper worth over Rs 300 crore on the exchange platform and were preparing to take delivery of the goods from the exchange-accredited warehouse in Kochi after the contract expired on January 5.

To their surprise they were informed by the warehouse that the Commissioner of Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) in Kerala had sealed the exchange-accredited warehouses on detection of adulterated pepper stocks in November.

### **Warehouses sealed**

Six warehouses accredited by the NCDEX in Ernakulam and Alappuzha districts in Kerala were sealed on charges of having adulterated pepper stocks.

### **plea for compensation**

The petitioners have asked the Court to direct NCDEX to deliver pepper according to the contract specifications and also compensate them for the price difference.

As an alternative, the exchange can pay the petitioners the value of the commodity along with VAT (value-added tax) and interest at 18 per cent a year, the members said.

The association members have also sought additional compensation towards warehouse charges.

The petitioners said their association has cautioned the NCDEX and the market regulator, Forward Markets Commission, on adulterated pepper being stored in the warehouses even before the FSSA took action.

## Maize exports may dip by one-third this year

Lower crop, rising domestic demand cited as reasons



*Limited export window: A farmer drying his maize crop.*

**New Delhi, March 25:** Maize exports in the current season are expected to be lower by about a third over last year's record high of 4.8 million tonnes on a lower crop and rising domestic demand.

Trade expects maize exports to be in the region of around 3-3.5 mt for the crop marketing year-ending August 2013.

“The lower output in the kharif season has already resulted in a decline in exports during the first half,” an

official with a multinational exporting firm said. The latest export figures are not available.

Maize output in 2012-13 is pegged at around 21 mt on account of lower crop in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan due to erratic monsoons.

Last year, the country's maize output stood at 21.57 mt.

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra are the three top maize producing States accounting for half of the country's output.

Karnataka accounts for about a fifth of maize harvest, followed by AP at 18 per cent and Maharashtra at 12 per cent.

Further, the trade believes that the maize has an export window only for the next two to three months till June-July after which the global supplies are expected to ease.

“The rabi maize crop in Bihar, which has been slightly delayed, looks higher by about 20 per cent. There is a potential to export till June-July. With easing global supplies from August and prices coming under pressure, as reflected in the Chicago futures, exports from India were likely to be unviable,” an official from another multinational exporter said.

Bihar accounts for about seven per cent of the country's output of 21 mt. The Chicago corn prices have eased on better planting prospects in the US and Brazil.

Reports said corn planting in the US for 2013 is forecast to touch 97.75 million hectares, the highest in 77 years.

Corn contracts for May on Chicago Board of Trade are hovering around \$7.26 a bushel.

September 2013 contracts are hovering around \$5.97, reflecting an easing trend in prices.

India's maize exports have more than doubled in the past few years from 1.9 mt in 2009-10 to 4.8 mt in 2011-12.

Maize is largely exported to the Far East nations, where it is used for livestock feed.

## **Cotton may slide on weak export offtake**



**Rajkot, March 25:** Cotton prices were almost steady on the back of lower export demand. According to market sources, the overall trend is negative and cotton prices may decline this week.

Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton quoted at Rs 38,000-38,200 a candy of 356 kg. B-grade cotton was traded at Rs 37,700-37,900. V-797 cotton A grade was Rs 30,000-30,500.

About 28,000-30,000 bales of cotton (of 170 kg) arrived in Gujarat and 90,000 bales arrived across the country.

A Rajkot-based cotton broker said that due to financial year-end demand was limited and it may decline further .

Cotton prices also may come down by Rs 500-700 a candy this week.

Kapas price was down by Rs 5-7 to Rs 960-990 for 20 kg in Saurashtra region. According to market sources, APMCs in Gujarat will close for week due to financial closing.

A grade cotton quoted between Rs 37,500 and Rs 38,500 a candy and Rs 37,500-38,700 in Madhya Pradesh.

Traders said that local mills scaled down buying ahead of yearly account closing. Although demand may again improve from next month as mills don't have much stock, they added.

An Ahmedabad-based trader said that export demand, particularly from Pakistan, may also pick up if prices fall below Rs 38,000 a candy as spinners are facing shortage of quality cotton there.

## **Higher arrivals, slack buying grind turmeric**



**Erode, March 25:** Spot turmeric prices decreased by Rs 600 a quintal as traders were having adequate stocks with them and stockists also were not interested in building up inventories.

“Though the traders and exporters are getting good orders from North India, they quoted lower prices on Monday, as almost all of them have adequate stock. Only one more auction is to be conducted on Thursday during this fiscal. So, no trader is willing to build up inventories and purchased meagre quantity of the spice, ” said R.K.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said after several months, 10,000 bags of turmeric arrived for sale on Monday. So traders quoted lower price. They also procured only 40 per cent of the arrived stock.

Even the stockists have purchased limited quantity.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,699-7,669 and the root variety Rs 4,699-6,598.

**Salem Hybrid Crop:** The finger variety fetched Rs 6,667-8,229 and the root variety Rs 6,177-7,100. Of the arrival of 1,215 bags, only 406 were sold. At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety quoted Rs 6,371-7,576, the root variety Rs 6,069-6,869. Of the 1,088 bags arrived, only 408 found takers.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 6,090-8,559; the root variety Rs 5,757-6,969. Of the 196 bags arrived, 160 bags were sold. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 6,229-

8,189 and the root variety Rs 5,989-6,809. Of the 876 bags, 696 were traded.

---