

The past & present of Indian environmentalism



On the 27th of March 1973 — exactly 40 years ago — a group of peasants in a remote Himalayan village stopped a group of loggers from felling a patch of trees. Thus was born the Chipko movement, and through it the modern Indian environmental movement itself.

The first thing to remember about Chipko is that it was not unique. It was representative of a wide spectrum of natural resource conflicts in the 1970s and 1980s — conflicts over forests, fish, and pasture; conflicts about the siting of large dams; conflicts about the social and environmental impacts of unregulated mining. In all

these cases, the pressures of urban and industrial development had deprived local communities of access to the resources necessary to their own livelihood. Peasants saw their forests being diverted by the state for commercial exploitation; pastoralists saw their grazing grounds taken over by factories and engineering colleges; artisanal fisherfolk saw themselves being squeezed out by large trawlers.

Social justice and sustainability

In the West, the environmental movement had arisen chiefly out of a desire to protect endangered animal species and natural habitats. In India, however, it arose out of the imperative of human survival. This was an environmentalism of the poor, which married the concern of social justice on the one hand with sustainability on the other. It argued that present patterns of resource use disadvantaged local communities and devastated the natural environment.

Back in the 1970s, when the state occupied the commanding heights of the economy, and India was close to the Soviet Union, the activists of Chipko and other such movements were dismissed by their critics as agents of Western imperialism. They had, it was alleged, been funded and promoted by foreigners who hoped to keep India backward. Slowly, however, the sheer persistence of these protests forced the state into making some concessions. When Indira Gandhi returned to power, in 1980, a Department of Environment was established at the Centre, becoming a full-fledged Ministry a few years later. New laws to control pollution and to protect natural forests were enacted. There was even talk of restoring community systems of water and forest management.

Meanwhile, journalists and scholars had begun more systematically studying the impact of environmental degradation on social life across India. The pioneering reportage of Anil Agarwal, Darryl D' Monte, Kalpana Sharma, Usha Rai, Nagesh Hegde and others played a critical role in making the citizenry more aware of these problems. Scientists such as Madhav Gadgil and A.K.N. Reddy began working out sustainable patterns of forest and energy use.

Through these varied efforts, the environmentalism of the poor began to enter school and college pedagogy. Textbooks now mentioned the Chipko and Narmada movements. University departments ran courses on environmental sociology and environmental history. Specialist journals devoted to these subjects were now printed and read. Elements of an environmental consciousness had, finally, begun to permeate the middle class.

Changing perception

In 1991 the Indian economy started to liberalise. The dismantling of state controls was in part welcome, for the licence-permit-quota-Raj had stifled innovation and entrepreneurship. Unfortunately, the votaries of liberalisation mounted an even more savage attack on environmentalists than did the proponents of state socialism. Under their influence the media, once so sensitive to environmental matters, now began to demonise people like Medha Patkar, leader of the Narmada movement. Influential columnists charged that she, and her comrades, were relics from a bygone era, old-fashioned leftists who wished to keep India backward. In a single generation, environmentalists had gone from being seen as capitalist cronies to being damned as socialist stooges.

Environmentalists were attacked because, with the dismantling of state controls, only they asked the hard questions. When a new factory, highway, or mining project was proposed, only they asked where the water or land would come from, or what the consequences would be for the quality of the air, the state of the forests, and the livelihood of the people. Was development under liberalisation only going to further intensify the disparities between city and countryside? Before approving the rash of mining leases in central India, or the large hydel projects being built in the high (and seismically fragile) Himalayas, had anyone systematically assessed their social and environmental costs and benefits? Was a system in which the Environmental Impact Assessment was written by the promoter himself something a democracy should tolerate? These,

and other questions like them, were brushed off even as they were being asked.

Steady deterioration

Meanwhile, the environment continued to deteriorate. The levels of air pollution were now shockingly high in all Indian cities. The rivers along which these cities were sited were effectively dead. Groundwater aquifers dipped alarmingly in India's food bowl, the Punjab. Districts in Karnataka were devastated by open-cast mining. Across India, the untreated waste of cities was dumped on villages. Forests continued to decline, and sometimes disappear. Even the fate of our national animal, the tiger, now hung in the balance.

A major contributory factor to this continuing process of degradation has been the apathy and corruption of our political class. A birdwatcher herself, friendly with progressive conservationists such as Salim Ali, Indira Gandhi may have been the Prime Minister most sensitive (or at least least insensitive) to matters of environmental sustainability. On the other hand, of all Prime Ministers past and present Dr. Manmohan Singh has been the most actively hostile. This is partly a question of academic background; economists are trained to think that markets can conquer all forms of scarcity. It is partly a matter of ideological belief; both as Finance Minister, and now as Prime Minister, Dr. Singh has argued that economic growth must always take precedence over questions of environmental sustainability.

An environmentally literate Prime Minister would certainly help. That said, it is State-level politicians who are most deeply involved in promoting mining and infrastructure projects that eschew environmental safeguards even as they disregard the communities they displace. In my own State, Karnataka, mining barons are directly part of the political establishment. In other States they act through leaders of the Congress, the BJP, and regional parties.

In 1928, 45 years before the birth of the Chipko movement, Mahatma Gandhi had said: “God forbid that India should ever take to industrialisation after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom (England) is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.”

The key phrase in this quotation is ‘after the manner of the West.’ Gandhi knew that the Indian masses had to be lifted out of poverty; that they needed decent education, dignified employment, safe and secure housing, freedom from want and from disease. Likewise, the best Indian environmentalists — such as the founder of the Chipko movement, Chandi Prasad Bhatt — have been hard-headed realists. What they ask for is not a return to the past, but for the nurturing of a society, and economy, that meets the demands of the present without imperilling the needs of the future.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the finest minds in the environmental movement sought to marry science with sustainability. They sought to design, and implement, forest, energy, water and transport policies that would augment economic productivity and human welfare without causing environmental stress. They acted in the knowledge that, unlike the West, India did not have colonies whose resources it could draw upon in its own industrial revolution.

In the mid-1980s, as I was beginning my academic career, the Government of Karnataka began producing an excellent annual state of the environment report, curated by a top-ranking biologist, Cecil Saldanha, and with contributions from leading economists, ecologists, energy scientists, and urban planners. These scientific articles sought to direct the government’s policies towards more sustainable channels. Such an effort is inconceivable now, and not just in Karnataka. For the prime victim of economic liberalisation has been environmental sustainability.

Corporate interests

A wise, and caring, government would have deepened the precocious, far-seeing efforts of our environmental scientists. Instead, rational, fact-based scientific research is now treated with contempt by the political class. The Union Environment Ministry set up by Indira Gandhi has, as the *Economic and Political Weekly* recently remarked, ‘buckled completely’ to corporate and industrial interests. The situation in the States is even worse.

India today is an environmental basket-case; marked by polluted skies, dead rivers, falling water-tables, ever-increasing amounts of untreated wastes, disappearing forests. Meanwhile, tribal and peasant communities continue to be pushed off their lands through destructive and carelessly conceived projects. A new Chipko movement is waiting to be born.

(Ramachandra Guha’s books include How Much Should a Person Consume? He can be reached at ramachandraguha@yahoo.in)

Polluted skies, dead rivers, disappearing forests and displacement of peasants and tribals are what we see around us 40 years after the Chipko movement started

‘Farmers will be told to be wary of parties’ promises’

The Karnataka State Sugarcane Cultivators’ Association will conduct meetings in all districts to caution farmers against being carried away by “false promises” made by political parties.

The objective is to highlight the failure of various political parties to uphold farmers' interests. This was decided during the State-level convention held here on Tuesday.

Kurubur Shanthakumar, president of the association, said that in the run-up to the Assembly elections, mainstream political parties would release their election manifestoes and try to woo farmers. The association would caution its members to be wary of parties' promises as they were just "publicity stunts".

"Though farmers are aware of the problems affecting them, they tend to be carried away by promises that have never been fulfilled. We will ask them to question political parties as to why they failed to implement the election manifesto released during the last elections," he added.

Meetings would be held across all districts in the State once campaigning gained momentum, according to the association. Meanwhile, it has also urged the government to announce Rs. 15,000 per acre as compensation for crop loss owing to drought. The association has also urged the government to sanction subsidy to farmers to procure agricultural equipment. The government has also been urged to announce 75 per cent subsidy for installation of drip irrigation systems.

Priority to farming, infrastructure

Green clubs to be formed in all panchayat wards

District panchayat vice-president K.G. Anitha has presented the annual budget of the panchayat for 2013-'14, envisaging total revenue to the tune of Rs.77,08,42,481, and expenditure to the tune of Rs.73,12,86,000, leaving behind a surplus of Rs.3,95,56,481.

The budget has given special emphasis on infrastructure development, agriculture, healthcare, education, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes welfare and drinking water supply.

Presiding over the meeting, Saji Chacko, president, district panchayat, said the budget had stressed the importance of diverting the potential of the workforce under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to productive sector.

Prof. Chacko said the district panchayat would take necessary initiatives to form green clubs in all 811 panchayat wards in the district with the help of Kudumbasree members.

The green clubs would prepare farm land that had been lying fallow in each ward for cultivation thereby creating as many as 200 workdays in each ward, he said.

Ms. Anitha said dairy farmers' clubs would be formed in all the panchayats in the district.

For roads and bridges

She said Rs.34 crore had been set apart for construction of new roads and bridges as well as repair and renovation of old ones. The panchayat had also set apart Rs.3 crore for housing and Rs.2 crore for drinking water supply in the next financial year.

Ms. Anitha said the panchayat had made a budget allocation of Rs.30 lakh for providing motorised scooter to physically challenged persons, Rs.15 lakh each for the de-addiction centre attached to the district hospital at Kozhencherry, installing a cubicle lift at the district panchayat office, and extending the activities of the Santvanom project to more schools in the district.

A total of Rs.5 crore had been set apart for various welfare programmes for Scheduled Castes and Rs.2 crore for Scheduled Tribes.

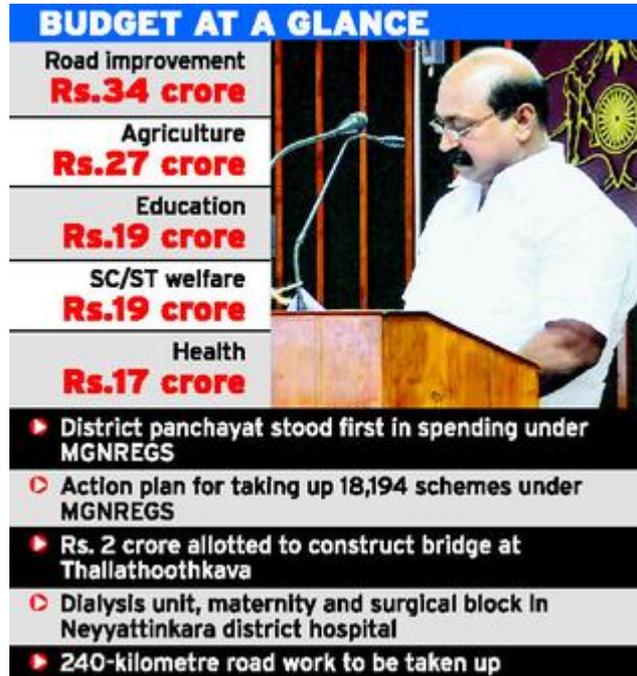
Prof. Chacko said the district panchayat had also made a budget allocation of Rs.1 crore each for installing solar panels at the district hospital at Kozhencherry, district panchayat office, and agriculture farms.

Rs.27 crore to revitalise farming

District panchayat budget earmarks funds for growing paddy

Upgrade of the district hospital at Neyyattinkara, setting up of an advanced medical laboratory in the city, revival of agriculture land and waterbodies, road improvement, and

starting of civil service coaching in schools form part of the proposals outlined in the annual Budget of the district panchayat.



The Budget for the financial year 2013-14, which was presented before the panchayat committee on Tuesday, estimates revenue of Rs.167.52 crore and expenditure of Rs.159.18 crore.

Presenting a surplus Budget of Rs.8.33 crore, district panchayat vice-president Rufus Daniel said the local body planned to set up a dialysis unit and maternity and surgical blocks in the district hospital.

A sum of Rs.12 crore allotted by the State government would be utilised to improve the medical care facilities in the hospital. The aim was to prepare it to apply for accreditation by the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare Providers, he said.

Diagnostic lab

A sum of Rs.1 crore has been allocated to establish a diagnostic laboratory on the premises of the District Medical Office. A dialysis unit will be established at the Peroorkada hospital, and provision has been made in the Budget to procure a mobile dialysis unit.

Like in the current year's budget, the agriculture sector gets the lion's share to fund schemes to reclaim lost farmland and waterbodies. Apart from the budgetary allocation of Rs.27 crore, the panchayat plans to use funds to the tune of Rs.50 crore under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) to make agriculture land cultivable and restore waterbodies.

Besides provision for introducing lift irrigation, in which water is lifted using pumps and transported to agriculture fields where there is no natural availability of water, the panchayat plans to introduce comprehensive paddy cultivation at Venjaramoodu, Kilimanoor, Karode, Chenkal, Vellayani, Cherunniyur, Navaikulam, Kolliuil, and Kottukal.

A sum of Rs.80 lakh has been allotted for the paddy cultivation.

For schools

The Budget also proposes a slew of measures to improve the functioning of 73 schools under the control of the panchayat.

The proposals include starting civil service coaching in 20 schools, counselling and special tuition for academically weak students, improvement of laboratories and libraries, education of children who have HIV/AIDS, distribution of free cycles to students belonging to the Below Poverty Line category, and creating awareness among students of healthy living habits.

The Budget makes provision for setting up a centre at Alamkode where produce made by Kudumbasree, self-help groups, and societies can be displayed for sale.

A sum of Rs.1 crore has been set aside for setting up the centre.

MGNREGS funds

An action plan for utilising funds under the MGNREGS has found mention in the Budget.

As per the plan, as many as 18,194 schemes meant for water conservation, cleaning up of lakes, and protection of canals will be taken up during the next financial year.

Later, talking to presspersons, district panchayat president Remani P. Nair said the local body stood first among all panchayats in the State in utilising funds under the MGNREGS.

‘Milma model suitable for farm sector’



Prayar Gopalakrishnan, former chairman of Milma, addressing a seminar on ‘Agriculture marketing- call for paradigm shift’, in Thrissur on Tuesday.— Photo: By special arrangement

A marketing model evolved by the Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) is suitable for the entire agriculture sector, Prayar Gopalakrishnan, former chairman of Milma, has said.

He was addressing a seminar on “Agriculture marketing-call for paradigm shift”, organised by the College of Cooperation, Banking and Management (CCBM) of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), here on Tuesday.

“If the producers of agricultural products work together to brand and sell their products with assured quality, farming will be profitable. Such a system is inevitable to sustain farming,” he said.

He said that farmers should exercise their right to fix the prices for their products.

Presiding over the function, KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran said the farmers should get at least 50 per cent of the terminal price of their products. “They do not get it now. The farmer should be linked to the value chain through appropriate mechanisms. Procurement and marketing through public sector units or formation of farmers’ cooperatives will enable farmers to have control over pricing. For pricing, farmers may consult experts,” he said.

A. Sukumaran , associate dean; KAU general council members V. S. Sathyaseelan and K. Gireendrababu; director of research T. R. Gopalakrishnan, students’ union president S. Sathyajit; and K. N. Ushadevi, head of the Department of Rural Marketing Management, spoke.

The seminar discussed restructuring of agriculture markets, market interventions and scope of value addition in agriculture.

Papers were presented by V.V. Pushpangadan, Chief Executive Officer, Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Kerala (Restructuring of agriculture markets in Kerala); P. J. Shivakumar, director, Kerafed (Price support system and market intervention in Kerala agriculture); Alex Thomas, managing director of Tierra Foods (Value addition: opportunities in agricultural commodities); and Degaul Thomas, winner of the State government’s Young Farmer Award for 2012 (Agricultural marketing issues - ground realities).

Agriculture varsity fails to reap success



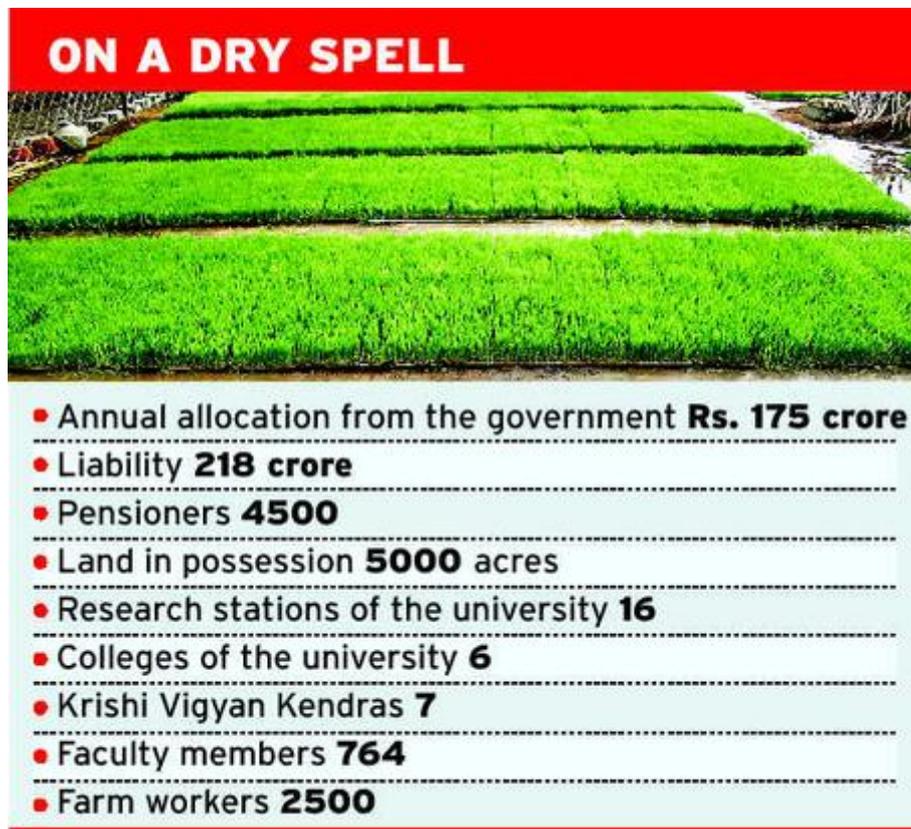
HEYDAYS LONG GONE: Entrance of the Kerala Agricultural University near Thrissur.— Photo: K.K. Mustafah

The Kerala Agricultural University is struggling to survive the inclement weather in Kerala.

Questions are now being asked about the relevance of the university, established for providing “excellence in agricultural education, research and extension for sustainable agricultural development and livelihood security of farming community”, in a State where agriculture has ceased to be a profitable vocation.

The drastic reduction in agriculture holdings, reduced productivity and falling income are deterring youngsters

from taking up agriculture. The ever increasing cost of labour and acute shortage of farm workers too dissuade even those interested in farming from the field.



Burgeoning debts, massive spending on salary and pension of staff and insufficient allocation from the exchequer pinning the university to the ground

Has the university succeeded in supporting the farmers and farming sector of the State or has it ended as another white elephant which serves only the ends of its employees? A cursory look at university's functioning would tempt one to take the later view.

Pinned to ground

Burgeoning debts, massive spending on salary and pension of the staff and insufficient allocation from the exchequer are pinning the public sector institution to the ground.

The KAU is one of the biggest employers of the State with around 4,500 persons including over 2,500 farm workers and 1,800 ministerial staff in its pay rolls. After splitting the annual plan fund between pensions and salaries, precious little is left for the university for its projects, say those associated with the institution.

“The university has an outstanding liability of around Rs. 218 crore including the Rs. 62 crore retirement benefits of its former employees,” says P. Rajendran, Vice Chancellor of the university.

The demand for funds for clearing the debts has not materialized. Once it is cleared, the university can stand on its feet, he says.

The trifurcation of the KAU into Kerala University for Fisheries and Ocean Studies and the Kerala University for Veterinary Sciences was expected to shed the flab.

However, it has only increased the burden of the KAU. Under the trifurcation package, it parted with some of its holdings and staffers. While 75 staffers opted for the Fisheries University, 160 went to the Veterinary University. However, the KAU continues to pay the pension and other retirement benefits to around 4,800 persons including those who served the fisheries and veterinary faculties of the undivided university.

Footprint in farm sector

Despite its shortcomings, the university has left its footprint in the socio-economic and agriculture sectors of the State, claim those at the helm of affairs of the university.

Most rice varieties cultivated in the State including Uma, Jyothi and Prathyasha were developed by the university over the years. It has also developed 56 varieties of vegetables including bitter gourd and ladies finger. Six banana varieties, seven pepper and salinity-resistant rice varieties are the contributions of the university.

Besides Kerala, a large number of farmers in the neighbouring States of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu are using varieties developed by the university, says Mr. Rajendran.

The vice chancellor also took pride in claiming that most of the officials of the State Agriculture department and related institutions were the alumni of the university. It has also been serving the State and its farmers through various extension activities. Small farm mechanisation, precision farming, improvement of productivity, value addition to agriculture produces and promoting agri-business will be the future thrust areas of the university, he says.

T.R Gopalakrishnan, Director of Research, KAU, believes that researches undertaken by the university are still relevant in Kerala. The university was now focused on addressing the issues raised by shortage of labourers and

challenges of climate change in the agriculture sector, he said.

According to an earlier document, the institution was providing economic benefits to the tune of Rs. 600 crore annually to the State in general and farmers in particular. The assessment was made after “taking into account the area under which the particular crop is cultivated and the increase in the production per variety,” it said.

But the critics of the university simply refuse to buy the arguments of the top honchos of the university.

Tony Thomas, president of One Earth One Life, an environmental NGO, says that the university has become a burden to the State as it failed the farmers and the farming sector.

Each year, around 10 persons obtain their doctorate in agriculture from the university. However, most of them would be of no benefit to the farmers. The agriculture scientists don't have any on-farm experience. Even while claiming that the paddy varieties developed by them are farmed extensively in Kerala, it should be seen how many farmers were using these seeds. A large number of farmers from Palakkad are procuring seeds from agricultural universities of Tamil Nadu, he says.

Mr. Thomas, who is also the director board member of the Kerala Jaiva Karshaka Samity, was vociferous in his criticism against the approach of the university to organic farming.

The university representatives had vehemently opposed the farming practice at a meeting convened by the previous government for formulating an organic farming policy for the State. The university also failed to protect the rich agro-biodiversity of the State, he says.

Wayanad: thrust on paddy cultivation

Fund for women empowerment, educational schemes

The budget of the Wayanad district panchayat for 2013-2014 gives priority to rejuvenate paddy cultivation, welfare of the tribesmen, and improve infrastructure.

The budget, presented by vice-president and chairperson, finance standing committee, A. Devaki on Tuesday, shows revenue of Rs.95.96 crore, expenses of Rs.81.56 crore, and surplus of Rs.14.4 crore.

Speaking to the media after the budget presentation, district panchayat president K.V. Sasi said special provision had been made for rejuvenating paddy cultivation to achieve food security.

A sum of Rs.2.4 crore had been earmarked for the purpose and a farm would be set up to improve the sector during the fiscal.

He said the budget earmarked Rs.4.44 crore for constructing houses for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as well as the general section.

Apart from this, Rs.1.22 crore had been allocated to repay loans under the EMS housing project.

For schools

A sum of Rs.3.6 crore had been earmarked for improving infrastructure in schools in the district.

A sum of Rs.1.62 had been allocated for the educational projects of the panchayat such as Akshara Jyothi, a project to improve academic skills of students in the general category, and Gothra Velichom, a project to prevent the tribal children from dropping out of schools, Mr. Sasi said.

Women empowerment schemes had been allotted funds and Rs.1.5 crore set apart for setting up a handicrafts training centre and shopping complex for the tribes women at Kaniyampetta.

Health sector

Mr. Sasi said the budget also earmarked Rs.1.1 crore for the health sector, including constructing a solid waste treatment plant at the district hospital Mananthavadi (Rs.70 lakh).

Palliative care

A sum of Rs. 11 lakh had been set apart for welfare of the HIV/AIDS patients and activities of the pain and palliative clinic.

A sum of Rs.6 crore had been allotted for the Backward Regions Grant Fund projects such as construction of school buildings (Rs.1.88 crore), road tarring works (Rs.1.51 crore), drinking water schemes (Rs. 1.34 crore), construction of culverts and bridges (Rs.38 lakh), and improving the condition of tribal colonies (Rs.1.97 crore).

He said Rs.6.54 crore would be utilised for repairing roads.

Plan to make Kollam fallow paddy field-free

Farm sector gets Rs.28 crore in district panchayat budget

With a thrust on development, the 2013-2014 budget of the Kollam district panchayat showing a revenue of Rs.98,23,63,700, an expenditure of Rs.69,32,35,600 and a surplus of Rs.28,91,28,100 was presented on Tuesday by K. Jagadamma, chairperson of the Finance Standing Committee and vice-president of the panchayat.

The agriculture sector gets an allocation of Rs.28 crore and the budget proposes to bring 25,000 acres in the district under paddy cultivation during the year. The aim is to bring the entire paddy fields in the district under cultivation through a totally mechanised process on the Wadakkancherry model. The district panchayat will provide 50 per cent subsidy on farm machines purchased by the grama panchayats in association with the respective block panchayats.

A modern rice mill, farm tourism, small-scale irrigation projects, promotion of cashew plantations, cattle feed mixing units and an organic manure production unit are some of the highlights in the budget for the agriculture sector. In order to revive water bodies such as ponds and streams a separate allocation of Rs.2.50 crore has also been made.

Dairy sector

For animal husbandry and dairy development programmes, an allocation of Rs. 2 crore has been made. In the attempts to make the district self-sufficient in milk production, the ambitious 'Ksheeramritham' scheme will be extended to more panchayats. While the district's daily requirement of milk is 5 lakh litres, the production is about 3.5 lakh litres. In order to create the basic facilities for industrial growth in the district, an allocation of Rs.1.89 crore has been made.

The budget proposes elaborate schemes for the protection of the three main rivers and two lakes in the district. A scheme to plant bamboo saplings along the banks of the Kallada, Ithikara and

Pallikal rivers has been mooted to protect the banks from sand erosion. A sum of Rs. 5 lakh has been allocated for the purpose.

Another scheme proposed in the budget is “overcoming Anglo-phobia” and Rs.5 lakh has been allocated for it. The scheme aims at making students fluent in English. Ms. Jagadamma said that the scheme was the first of its kind in the State. For the overall progress of the education sector, an allocation of Rs.5 crore has been made.

The health sector gets an allocation of Rs. 4 crore. It will be utilised to provide more facilities at the District Hospital, the Government Victoria Hospital for Women and Children, the District Ayurveda Hospital and the District Homoeo Hospital.

CM announces compensation for crop loss

Chief Minister N. Rangasamy on Monday announced a compensation of Rs. 20,000 per hectare for the failure of standing paddy in Karaikal region.

He made the announcement in the Assembly that paddy (samba) crop raised in 4,749 hectares of land holdings in Karaikal region had been affected due to the non-arrival of water from the Cauvery river. Considering the distress faced by the farmers, the government would give away Rs. 20,000 per hectare.

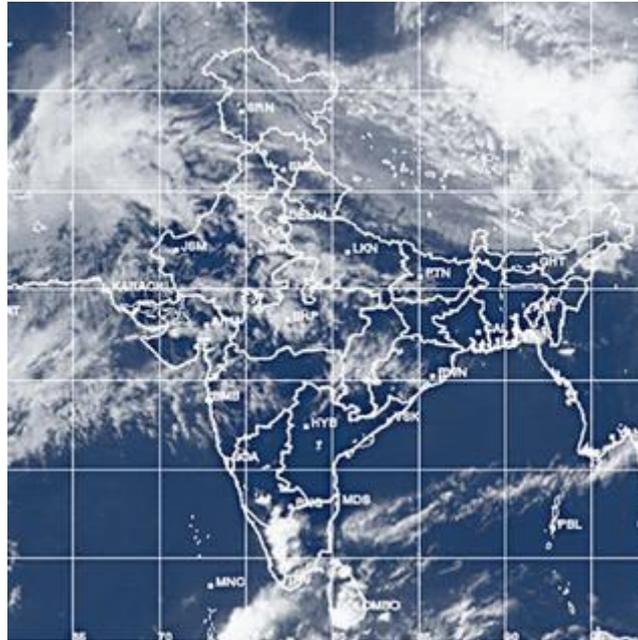
It would cost Rs. 9.50 crore to the exchequer, he said.

Power crisis: YSRC to asses crop losses

MLAs of YSRC will undertake a tour of some key Assembly constituencies, including that of Chief Minister N.Kiran Kumar Reddy, to assess withering of crops due to prolonged power cuts. Party MLA Kapu Ramachandra Reddy said the MLAs would tour

agricultural lands in the constituencies of Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, Assembly Speaker and Deputy Speaker, . — Special Correspondent

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on March 26th.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	31	16	0	5
New Delhi (Sfd)	30	17	0	1
Chandigarh	27	14	1	24
Hissar	28	14	0	36
Bhuntar	25	6	0	90
Shimla	18	9	0	68
Jammu	26	13	0	32
Srinagar	16	6	0	67
Amritsar	27	12	0	4
Patiala	28	14	0	19
Jaipur	31	20	0	0
Udaipur	33	18	0	0
Allahabad	38	17	0	3
Lucknow	34	15	0	0
Varanasi	37	18	0	2
Dehradun	27	13	2	17
Agartala	35	24	0	25
Ahmedabad	36	22	0	0
Bangalore	35	23	0	1
Bhubaneshwar	41	23	0	0
Bhopal	36	20	0	20

Chennai	35	24	0	32
Guwahati	34	19	0	14
Hyderabad	38	24	0	0
Kolkata	38	26	0	0
Mumbai	31	25	0	0
Nagpur	40	21	0	15
Patna	36	19	0	0
Pune	37	21	0	3
Thiruvananthapuram	34	23	11	80
Imphal	30	16	17	26
Shillong	35	24	0	25

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

MAINLY DRY WEATHER

RAINFALL Weather was mainly dry over the region.

MAXIMUM TEMPERATURES : The maximum temperatures rose markedly in Himachal Pradesh, rose appreciably in Jammu and Kashmir, fell appreciably in Haryana and fell in west Uttar Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were below normal in west Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 37.7°C recorded at Allahabad (Uttar Pradesh)

MINIMUM TEMPERATURES : The minimum temperatures fell in Uttar Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were normal over the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 11.8°C recorded at Amritsar (Punjab).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 28th March

2013: Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir from tomorrow onwards.

Rain/thundershowers may occur at one or two places over Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab and north Haryana on 28th. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 28th March 2013: Mainly clear sky becoming partly cloudy sky.

Water level

Water level in Periyar dam stood at 112.80 feet with an inflow of 100 cusecs and discharge of 100 cusecs on Tuesday. The level in Vaigai dam stood at 45.87 feet with an inflow of 224 cusecs and discharge of 60 cusecs. The rainfall in (mm) is as follows: Periyar dam: 2, Thekkadi: 25.6, Gudalur: 24, Shanmuganadhi: 3, Uthamapalayam: 10, Veerapandi: 63, Vaigai dam: 15, Manjalar: 124, Marudanadhi: 106, Sothuparai: 36, Kuppanampatti: 40, Andipatti: 80, Kodaikanal: 5.2 and Sathiar recorded 2 mm rainfall.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Tuesday stood at 79.50 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 196.07 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs is discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 89.82 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 55 cusecs and 400 cusecs was discharged.

Kanyakumari

The level in Pechipparai dam stood at 8 feet. It was 29.60 feet in Perunchani, 4.26 feet in Chittar I, 4.36 feet in Chittar II and 3.60 feet in Poigai dam.

hindustantimes

Weather Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Mar 27

Max **Min**
32° | 25°

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Mar 28

Max **Min**
34° | 25°

Rain: 0
Humidity: 89
Wind: normal
Sunrise: 06:08
Sunset: 06:20
Barometer: 1008

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Mar 29	Saturday Mar 30	Sunday Mar 31	Monday Apr 1	Tuesday Apr 2
				
34° 25° Partly Cloudy	34° 25° Cloudy	34° 27° Cloudy	34° 27° Cloudy	33° 27° Overcast

THE TIMES OF INDIA | India

Farmers hail 'Amma' as their hero

COIMBATORE: An upbeat mood is visible across the farming community in Western Tamil Nadu ever since chief minister [J Jayalalithaa](#) directed Gas Authority of India (GAIL) to stop its natural gas pipeline laying work immediately and change its alignment so as not to affect the livelihood of farmers. Farmers across the region organized get-togethers to celebrate her decision. They prepared special pongal feasts in honour of Jayalalithaa, who they believe has fought valiantly, the Centre's unilateral attempts to encroach on their farmlands.

We had conveyed our grievances to the chief minister, including the worsening power crisis. Many governmental policies introduced are detrimental to the farming community. But the Chief Minister has won our hearts by showing extreme courage

in fighting a huge corporate," said K Kanthasamy of [Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sanghom](#).

Based on the outcome of a public hearing, Jayalalithaa told [GAIL](#) to restore the fields where trenches have been made to its original condition, remove pipelines that have been laid and compensate farmers for their losses. This is a bold initiative. We never expected such a strong response from the government," said K Ponnammal, a farmer from Sirukalanchiyur near Chennimalai, who organized a pongal feast in which 600 farmers participated.

"GAIL had attempted to stifle our voices using police force. It was not democratic in its approach. Huge trees including coconut trees were removed by them without considering the livelihood of locals," said P R Natarajan MP, who was in the forefront of the agitation by farmers.

We had no problem with them taking the pipeline through dry lands. But they refused to listen to us. They tried to use police force, imposing on our basic human rights and flouting all land acquisition rules," said P Sivakumar, leader of the umbrella body of agitating farmers' associations.

According to Natarajan, the main concern of farmers is their safety, which they felt would be compromised if the pipelines came up close to their homes. Secondly, they felt the compensation offered by the government was inadequate. Gail officials said that the compensation was being paid according to the Petroleum and Minerals Pipeline Act, 1962. However, farmers felt it was not in accordance with existing land prices.

The pipeline, known as the Kochi-Koottanad-Mangalore/Bangalore pipeline (KKBMPL), is meant to take natural gas from Kochi to Bangalore. It passes through Palakkad, Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode, Salem, Namakkal, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri. As many as 50,000 acres of land in Coimbatore district alone would have been affected if its original alignment was permitted, say farmers. The pipeline passes through 136 villages in seven districts of Tamil Nadu.

Govt launches special package for weavers, silk farmers

BERHAMPUR: The state government on Tuesday launched a special package for weavers, artisans and [silk](#) farmers of the state at Aska, about 40 km from here. Chief minister Naveen Patnaik had announced the package on January 8.

Under the special package, the government would bear the [insurance](#) premiums of the beneficiaries under the health insurance scheme and [Mahatma Gandhi Bunakar Bima Yojana](#) (MGBBY), provide Rs 45,000 to weavers in three phases for construction of work sheds and solar lantern to each family. The annual premium share of the beneficiaries is Rs 50 and Rs 80 under health and MGBBY, respectively.

The landless and qualified weavers and artisans' families would also be provided assistance under the Mo Kudia scheme. Similarly, weavers and artisans aged above 60 would be included in Madhubabu [Pension](#) Yojana of Rs 300 a month. "The sops are aimed at betterment of people depending on

handicraft and handloom sectors for their livelihood, said Textiles and handloom minister Sarojini Hembram. Around 50,000 families would benefit from the special scheme.

The minister distributed solar lantern among 200 weavers' families of Ganjam and Nayagarh districts. She also gave away Rs 15,000 each to 20 weavers for construction of the work shed and health insurance claims to four of them.

Secretary of the department Usha Padhee said the government has decided to develop more clusters for the betterment of weavers and artisans. These clusters would comprise a common facility centre for training artisans in modern technology with a special emphasis on marketing of products, she added.

Besides, the silk farmers would be provided torchlight, gum boots, umbrellas and other essential safety equipment under the scheme. A development fund would be created for artisans and silk farmers for which the government would provide Rs 50 lakh in the first phase, textile officials announced in the meeting.

Business Standard ^{beta}
**Groundnut exporters' woes
continue**

**Russia's ban on groundnut imports from India raises
quality concern**



The woes of Indian groundnut exporters don't seem to end. With Russia imposing a fresh ban on groundnut imports from India, the issue of quality compliance has surfaced again.

In its notification earlier this year, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Apeda) had asked all groundnut exporters to secure quality certificates from the competent authority. Many exporters had objected to this, challenging the new regulations in the Madras High Court. Now, even as a verdict is yet to be pronounced, the ban comes as a blow to the industry.

"Now, brand India is at stake. A rejection and ban from Russia has worried the industry. This requires stricter compliance with the rules for quality," said Rajesh Bheda, chairman, Indian Oilseed and Produce Export Promotion Council (IOPEPC).

Last month, Russia's federal service for veterinary and phytosanitary surveillance had suspended rice and peanut imports from India.

According to data provided by Apeda, during the April-January period, groundnut exports from India stood at 4,55,415 tonnes, against 6,73,486 tonnes in the year-ago period.

Industry sources said groundnut supplies in the international market have increased, owing to bumper crops in the US and Argentina. According to estimates, for the year ending march, Argentina, the largest exporter of peanuts, is likely to record groundnut production of 8,70,000 tonnes, against 7,36,000 tonnes in the year-ago period.

"Last year was a bad year for key groundnut exporters China and Argentina. Hence, India recorded huge exports. But this year, there are bumper crops in Argentina and the US. So, the situation is different," said Bheda. He added groundnut exports wouldn't fall, as feared, but would stand at about 4,00,000 tonnes---higher than the three-year average.

Apeda has made it mandatory for groundnut processors to register with IOPEPC before March 31. The council would submit the data to Apeda. Exporters would have to ensure all groundnut processing units obtain HACCP (hazard analysis critical control points) certification by July 31.

On February 1, the Madras High Court had issued an interim stay on Apeda's regulations dated January 9. The stay followed a petition filed by Agrocrops Exim, challenging the regulations.

In its latest order, the court stated, "In the meantime, only those peanut exporters who complied with the regulations dated January 9 are permitted to export peanuts. This order is passed in modification of the earlier order passed on February 15, 2013."

Cashew workers demand increase in wages

Workers demand 75% hike, which the management is not ready to accept



Cashew processing operators are a worried lot. About 10,000 workers, comprising more than 95 per cent women, are demanding a wage hike. These

workers are engaged in the processing units in and around Palasa and Kasibugga areas in Srikakulam district.

Palasa is the largest cashew production centre in Andhra Pradesh with about 200 processing units. "Every two years, there is a wage agreement between labour and the processing unit owners. But this year, the workers are demanding a hike of 75 per cent, which the management is not ready to accept," said Malla Srinivasa Rao, president, Palasa Cashew Manufacturers Association.

The association said it expected some positive development in this regard next week otherwise the operators would shut units from April.

In March 2011, Palasa operators closed their units for 21 days due to unsettled wage revision. The labour department had to then intervene, he added.

Palasa cashew operators pay workers Rs 150-200 per day depending on the work. "Workers' salary account for 12 per cent of the total production cost at present. This will go up to 15 per cent if we agree to their demand," he said.

There are 25-30 cashew processing units operating on the Orissa borders, some 7-8 km from Palasa. "These operators pay even less - Rs 125 per day to the workers. If we hike the wages here, we would not be able to compete with them," he added.

Nil import duty on pulses likely for one more year

Move seen to tackle prices and augment domestic supply



The finance ministry may extend duty-free import of pulses for one more to March 2014 to stabilise prices and boost supply.

The current nil duty on pulses ends on March 31, 2013. There are no export of pulses as India is a net importer of pulses.

India imports around 3 million tonnes of pulses which is roughly three-fourths of world production. Incidentally even as fifty per cent of total production of pulses is in India, it is used for captive consumption.

Pulses are categorised as essential commodities and the government sells them at subsidised rates under its public distribution system.

As per official data, India's pulse import rose by 23 per cent to 3.31 million tonnes worth \$1,821.95 million (about Rs 10,149.5 crore) in the last fiscal. The country has prohibited export of pulses till March 2013, but the ban does not apply to kabuli chana or chickpea, whose exports were freed in March 2007.

Last year in October, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed) kept kharif oilseeds, pulses and cotton under alert for extending its price support scheme (PSS).

The arrangement provides for Nafed to procure these crops at the minimum support price (MSP), if the market price of the crops falls below the MSP.

PSS is a market intervention mechanism of the government under which government agencies procure crops from the market, if the prices fall below the minimum support price (MSP) prescribed by the agriculture ministry for that season. In order to enable PSS, the agriculture ministry has reverted to its old scheme of full reimbursement of the extra cost borne by procurement

agencies such as Nafed and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF), in procuring the crop at MSP and selling below market price.. For the past two years, the subsidy reimbursement for Nafed was capped at 15 per cent of the total amount, while the rest is yet to be sorted out between the states and the Centre. Therefore, this time, the government has reinstated the old system without the cap before the start of the procurement season.

The price of pulses has gone up sharply over one year since 2012. For instance, green gram dal (moong) has witnessed prices going up from Rs 4,900 in Jan-Mar 2012 to a high of Rs 7,200 per quintal in March 2013. In January 2013, it was Rs 7,000 per quintal. According to the first advance estimates of 2012-13 season, kharif pulses output is estimated lower by 14.6 per cent at 5.26 million tonnes compared with 6.16 mn tonnes last year.

Earlier, the Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACP) had suggested 10 per cent import duty on pulses to encourage domestic production. According to the commission, imposing 10 per cent duty on imports would enhance domestic output by bringing more irrigated areas under pulses. Indirectly, such a move would help save fertiliser subsidy as pulses are nitrogen fixing and help in stabilising production.

THE HINDU Business Line

Organic food may be exempt from farm products' export ban

Commerce Dept to take up the issue with other Ministries
New Delhi, March 26: The Government may exempt organic products from export ban imposed on farm commodities from time to time to check the spiralling prices in the domestic market.

The move, when implemented, is expected to give a boost to exports from the fast-growing sector by making supplies in the overseas market more predictable.

The Commerce Department is formulating a proposal for exempting organic products from export ban on the lines of the recent exemption given to processed food and is expected to soon discuss it with other ministries concerned.

Organic food is grown without the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides and is in great demand all over Europe, the US, Australia, Canada, Japan, South Africa and West Asia.

Exports of organic products jumped almost three times to touch \$360 million in 2011-12 from \$130 million in the previous year.

“Buyers of our organic products will have more confidence in their suppliers if they know for certain that exports will not stop due to Government intervention. Continuous exports will also encourage farmers to grow more organic food,” the official said.

Export of organic food products from the country include basmati rice, pulses, honey, tea, spices, coffee, oil seeds and fruits, according to farm products export body APEDA,

Exempting organic produce from export ban would not harm the interest of domestic consumers at the time of shortage of supply in the local markets as it is a minuscule part of total farm exports.

Exports of agricultural commodities monitored by APEDA in 2011-12 was a whopping Rs 82,000 crore (\$15 billion) compared with organic products exports at Rs 1,800 crore (\$360 billion).

In January, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs exempted processed food and value-added agricultural produce from export ban.

These include wheat of meslin flour, cereal flours, meal pellets and grains, milk products including casein and its products, butter and other fat derivatives from milk and dairy spread, cheese and curd and value added products of onion and peanut butter.

“We want the same logic to be extended to organic products. The Commerce Department is preparing a paper on why organic products should be exempted from export ban and it would be discussed with other ministries soon,” the official said.

Organic food is gaining ground in many parts of the world. According to US-based environmental research organisation The Worldwatch Institute, which has carried out a study on the growth of global organic agricultural practices, acreage under organic farms has trebled globally since 1999 to 37 million hectares despite a dip in 2009-10.

Tea from 4 estates sold for over

Coonoor, March 26: A record was created at The Nilgiri Planters’ Association Winter Speciality Tea Tea auction in which tea from four estates fetched over Rs 10,000 a kg.

“This has happened since we conducted the auction on pan-India platform through the Tea Board e-auction portal. The average price was Rs 1,882 a kg.

“In all, 1,640 kg out of 2,715 kg offered were sold fetching a total revenue of Rs 30.87 lakh in little over two hours,” NPA Chairman Suresh Jacob told *Business Line*.

‘Silver Sparkles’ tea of Glendale fetched the highest price of Rs 11,600 a kg with Kolkata Golden Tips Tea buying it.

This was closed followed by ‘Avataa Silver Needles’ tea of Bluegate Beverages, Billimalai. It was bought for Rs 11,550 a kg.

‘UPASI Silver Tips’ was bought by Kolkata Golden Tips Tea for Rs 11,000 and Chamraj Golden Tips tea was purchased by Sree Sai Corporation, Coonoor, for Rs 10,500.

Amul wants protection for dairy farmers

Anand, March 26: Amul, the iconic milk brand of the country's largest dairy co-operative, Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), on Tuesday, urged the Union Commerce Ministry to take care of farmers' interests while negotiating the proposed free trade agreement with the European Union. It urged the Government to have a re-look at the proposed EU-India FTA.

Import duty

Amul strongly opposed for providing any advantage in import duty on certain dairy products. R.S. Sodhi, Managing Director of GCMMF that which markets Amul, has written to the Union Minister of Commerce along these lines recently.

In a statement here, Amul said it is important to note that the EU does not permit import of dairy products from India in the name of SPS (Sanitary and Phyto Sanitary) measures, saying that Indian milch animals are not maintained, according to the EU standards and, hence, the dairy products are not safe for consumption.

Interestingly EU also subsidises its milk farmers by giving various incentives on export of their dairy products which actually make their products cheaper than the cost.

EU wants to export such subsidised dairy products to India, without giving access to the Indian dairy products to its own market which has a large NRI population, he said.

GI protection

The EU demands also reveal that it wants protection of some of the cheeses such as Gouda, Feta and Emmenthal under the Geographical Indication (GI) protection, meaning that Indian cheese producers cannot give such names to their cheese.

At the same time, the EU wants to sell Indian ethnic products such as paneer and lassi in their own market without giving any similar protection to India.

It is also noteworthy that in areas where India is richer, for example in traditional knowledge such as Ayurvedic medicine and genetic resources such as neem, the EU is refusing to take the measures to stop bio-piracy (i.e., protect biological resources by patenting them without paying royalties).

Essentially, Sodhi said, the EU is asking India to give more monopoly protection in the areas (GIs) where it has more intellectual property.

This will cost Indian consumers (who have to pay higher prices) and Indian producers (who will no longer be able to clearly identify their products and so are highly likely to lose sales) who are already in nascent stage of agro food processing industry.

He pointed out that the EU is actually anticipating a huge market opportunity in India once the comprehensive FTA is ratified. India needs to be “extremely cautious” at this approach of the EU to ensure that the country’s interests are not hampered.

Sodhi requested the Ministry to take up the matter ‘very strongly’ against this protection, especially when majority of 80 millions Indian farmers (many of whom are marginal and landless) are very much dependent on milk business by keeping one or two cattle which provide their daily livelihood.

Groundnut, cotton oil flat on limited buying



Rajkot, March 26: Groundnut oil and cotton oil were traded unchanged on Tuesday on nominal demand. According to edible oil traders, due to March year-ending buying from the mills was very limited.

Groundnut oil loose dropped by Rs 5 to Rs 1,185-1,190 for 10 kg, *telia* tin declined Rs 7 to Rs 1,820-1,821 for 15 kg, while groundnut oil new tin was unchanged at Rs 2,045-2,050.

About 1-2 tankers of groundnut oil were traded in Saurashtra.

Cotton oil

Similarly, cotton oil also remained steady on the back of weak demand.

Cotton oil wash was traded at Rs 580-583 for 10 kg and cotton oil new tin at Rs 1,040-1,045 for 10 kg.

About 15-20 tankers of cotton oil were traded.

nil demand

A Rajkot-based miller said that there were no trade inquiries due to March ending and moreover, most of the markets were closed due to Holi.

Edible oil prices may decline further this week as demand is almost nil.

Hopes of higher output pound wheat



Karnal, March 26: Wheat futures and spot market remained bearish on Tuesday.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for April contracts decreased by Rs 8 and traded at 1,418 a quintal with an open interest of 10,960 lots.

The grain had touched a high at Rs 1,426 a quintal earlier in the day.

May contracts dropped by Rs 7 to Rs 1,419 . While, wheat spot prices on the exchange eased by Rs 10 and traded at Rs 1,490 .

Future contracts and spot market declined on the lack of buying interest.

Expectation of higher production is also putting pressure on the market.

Wheat futures may extend further losses this week, said market experts.

In the physical market, dara remained unchanged and quoted at Rs 1,520-1,525 a quintal.

Around 100 quintals of dara variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and the stocks were directly offloaded at the mills. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,520 while delivery at the chakki was Rs 1,525.

Easy availability of stocks coupled with steady domestic demand kept wheat and flour prices unchanged, said Radhey Shyam, a trade expert.

After witnessing a fall last weekend, dara wheat and flour prices have been ruling unchanged since then.

Traders expect that wheat prices may fall further this week, he added.

Flour Prices

Following a steady trend in wheat, flour prices too remained unchanged and quoted at Rs 1,750 .

Similarly, after witnessing a fall last weekend, Chokar ruled flat and sold at Rs 1,320-1,340 a quintal.
