

THE HINDU

Action sought against those supplying substandard fertilizer

Hanubalu Hobli Growers' Association has urged the Agriculture Department to take stern action against those supplying substandard fertilizer and duping farmers.

Compensation

The association has also demanded that the government provide compensation to farmers who suffered losses by procuring substandard fertilizer from Hanubalu Prathamika Krushi Pattina Sahakara Sangha, a government-recognised agency.

H.B. Bhaskar, president of the association, told journalists here on Tuesday, that an official of the sangha was arrested by the police for supplying substandard potash (potassium chloride).

"Hundreds of farmers purchased potassium chloride from the sangha and used them hoping that it will increase the crop yield. They, however, suffered losses," he said.

He demanded that officers of the Agriculture Department visit godowns regularly and initiate measures to ensure that farmers get quality fertilizer. The association also demanded that the government bring in a law to penalise those who cheat farmers.

4,000 more farm ponds for Ramnad district

This drought-prone district is likely to get 4,000 more farm ponds in addition to the 5,000 ponds already sanctioned by the government.

The government sanctioned them as a special case after Collector K. Nanthakumar explained the drought situation and how farm ponds would be beneficial to the farmers, during failure of monsoon, at the Collectors' conference recently in Chennai.

Impressed with the farm pond model, the Government announced 50,000 farm ponds for the state. Of them, the district would get its share of 4,000 more farm ponds, official sources here said.

Official sources said the Agriculture department received more than 4,000 applications till Tuesday and is getting more and more applications. It is compiling the list of interested farmers to be sent for administrative sanction.

The list would be sent in a couple of days, the sources added. There has been a lukewarm response from the farmers in the beginning as they are not sure about the modalities of digging the ponds. Initially, they were told that the ponds would be dug by involving the workers employed under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme under the back-end subsidy model.

Later, the farmers were told that the initial digging would be done by the MGNREGA workers and the ponds completed by the Rural Development and Agriculture Engineering departments.

Though the farmers would be abundantly benefited by the scheme, most of the small and marginal farmers are reluctant to opt as they have to set apart at least 20 cents of their small holdings for digging the ponds. Paddy is cultivated on about 75,000 hectares of rain-fed land in the district.

Water level

The water level in Periyar dam was 112.30 feet (the permissible level is 136 feet) with an inflow of 50 cusecs and discharge of 50 cusecs on Tuesday. The water level in Vaigai dam (the full level is 71 feet) was 34.55 feet with nil inflow and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The rainfall recorded (in mm) is as follows: Thekkadi: 3.2, Gudalur: 23, Uthamapalayam: 18, Veerapandi: 4, Vaigai Dam: 1.5 and Sothuparai recorded 18 mm rainfall.

Go for only long-term samba crop: TNAU V-C

Farmers of Cauvery delta districts should go for only long-term samba crop this year, according to K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University

Encourage drip irrigation scheme, officials told

The State Monitoring Officer and Agricultural Production Commissioner, Sandeep Saxena, at a review meeting held here on Tuesday, asked the officials to promote and expand drip irrigation scheme among farmers in Ariyalur district.

He said farm ponds could be built to harness rainwater as Ariyalur was a rain-fed district. Officials should drive home the importance of water conservation, he said. The Cooperative Department should arrange for loans for drip irrigation.

Mr. Saxena called upon the officials to supply early to farmers agricultural inputs, which are subsidised by the Horticulture and Agriculture departments.

The government scheme to provide protected drinking water should be utilised fully, he said and urged the officials to expedite all development works being carried out in the district.

Mr. Saxena reviewed the schemes being implemented through Revenue and Social Welfare departments. He inspected a jasmine farm at Mallur and ascertained from farmers the benefits of drip irrigation and whether they had been given full subsidy under the scheme. District Collector M. Ravikumar and District Revenue Officer Karuppasamy were present, an official release said.

Neerbogam potato price to increase: TNAU

The Domestic Export Market Intelligence Centre (DEMIC) of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has asked potato farmers who are harvesting the Neerbogum (February-April) sown potato to sell their produce in July after storing it.

According to a university release, DEMIC has predicted that the price of harvested potato in June-July is expected to be around Rs. 27 – Rs. 28 a kg.

The present price that is expected to prevail till June is between Rs. 24 and Rs. 25 a kg. DEMIC studied the last 10 year price chart in the Nilgiris Co-operative Marketing Society (NCMS) in Mettupalayam before predicting the trend.

Mettupalayam is one of the major trading centres of potato in India. Nilgiris potato is priced based on quality, size, colour and shelf-life. Potatoes are graded manually and sold at Mettupalayam market. The Nilgiris potatoes are considered as the best ones because of its taste, hardness and higher shelf-life. Hence, they fetch higher price.

The potato from the Nilgiris district fetches higher price than that from the other States because of superior quality, taste, and preference. The peak period of storage is January – May after

which the stock is released in June-July. Farmers here store potato mainly for seed purpose. Also, the potato that come from other States like Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh are stored for seed purpose.

Potato can be stored in cold storage for about five to six months. For details, contact 0422-2431405 / 0423-2442170.

Training on spice powders at TNAU

The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training in preparation of spice powders and pickles on May 29 and 30 on the university premises.

The training will cover the preparation of the following aspects: spice powders, ready-to-use pastes, mushroom pickle, banana flower pickle, bitter gourd pickle, brinjal pickle, amla pickle and onion pickle.

Those interested can attend the training by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000.

For details, contact 0422-6611268.

1,000 ponds planned in Namakkal



After tasting success at Vadavathur panchayat – the driest part of the district – the administration is planning to construct 1,000 ponds in various parts of the district with the help of farmers.

District Collector D. Jagannathan said that the construction would be carried out under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) on land owned by small and marginal farmers.

“The cost of digging a pond ranges between Rs. 17,588 to Rs. 1,47,802 according to the size. Since labourers are paid under the job guarantee scheme, farmers get the pond free of cost,” Mr. Jagannathan said.

The Collector said that presidents of all the 322 panchayats in the district have been asked to motivate at least three farmers in respective panchayat to provide space on their land to construct the pond.

Head of the Krishi Vigyan Kendra here B. Mohan said that the benefits of farm ponds were enjoyed by farmers of Vadavathur panchayat. They were able to increase the area under cultivation and improve their income.

“The rain water, otherwise getting wasted, can be diverted to the pond. It will help recharge open wells and borewells in the nearby areas too,” he added. Scientists at the KVK said that pumping water from borewells into these farm ponds before using it for irrigation reduces dissolved salts in the water. This would prevent drip lines getting clogged because of sedimentary deposits, they said.

Water level

The water level in Papanasam dam stood at 49.75 feet (the maximum level is 143 feet) on Tuesday. The dam had an inflow of 13.54 cusecs and a discharge of 104.75 cusecs. The level in Manimuthar dam stood at 78.57 feet (118 feet being the maximum limit) with an inflow of 8 cusecs and a discharge of 275 cusecs.

Nagercoil

The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 13.60 feet on Tuesday. The level was 14.60 feet in Perunchani dam, 2.56 feet in Chittar I and 2.66 feet in Chittar II.

‘Use green manure for sustainable agriculture’

Green manures improve soil fertility and enhance farm productivity, said Sandeep Saxena, Principal Secretary and Agricultural Production Commissioner, at Perugavazhndan village in Tiruvarur district on Tuesday.

Speaking at a function to create awareness of green manures, Mr. Saxena said that Cauvery delta districts accounted for 45 per cent of the State's food production. Of this, 25 per cent came from Tiruvarur. Hence, farmers of the district should know the best cultivation practices. Use of green manures and traditional cultivation practices are the only way for sustainable agriculture, Mr. Saxena said.

He released a pamphlet brought out by KVK Needamangalam on green manures and producing value-added farm products. He distributed seeds of a green manure, *Kolinji*, to farmers.

The farmers were shown the cultivation of the manure by S. Ranganathan, secretary of the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association and member of the Research Committee of Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, at his farm at Perugavazhndan.

M. Rajendran, Director of Agriculture, said that *Uzhavar Peruvizhas* were organised from April 14 to May 20 in all the villages in Tiruvarur district to take agriculture technology and modern cultivation practices to farmers. He invited farmers of the district to take up oil palm cultivation. Now palm oil is being imported from countries like Malaysia and farmers can get 6,000 kg of palm oil from one acre of palm crop, he said.

Farmers can take up the cultivation of minor millets such as *thinai*, *cumbu*, and *ragi*. The cultivation of minor millets in the State had come down from 45 lakh hectares in 1980 to 15 lakh hectares today, he said.

Collector S. Natarajan said that priority was given for integrated farming and raising alternate crops such as bamboo in Tiruvarur district to improve farmers' income.

Upset farmers to take up UAS-B land issue with Chief Minister

As the deadline set by them to the government and the police to implement the order of a high-level committee to restore the land of the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore that had been taken away for a road project by the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike ended on Monday, angry farmers have now decided to take up the matter directly with Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

"A delegation will meet Mr. Siddaramaiah and Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda on May 25 and seek their intervention in restoring the land to the university," Karnataka State

Sugarcane Growers' Association president and Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha leader Kurubur Shanthkumar told *The Hindu* .

He pointed out that the BBMP's link road project cutting through UAS-B's land was ordered by the high-level committee constituted as per the High Court's direction.

"We will apprise the new leaders about officials' lack of seriousness in implementing the High Court's directions and the [role] of vested interests, including the real estate lobby. We will demand a commitment from these two leaders that they will abide by the court instructions and restore the university land in the interest of farmers as well as farm research," he said.

Expressing confidence that Mr. Siddaramaiah would stand by the farmers, he said the latter would brief him on their plan to restore the land themselves if the government continues to dither.

Background

The BBMP had taken 24 acres of the university land in September 2009 a link road to connect Yelahanka with Bellary Road and a 3.9 km road was already built at a cost of Rs. 15.19 crore.

Seven former vice-chancellors, the university alumni association and some environmentalists filed a public interest litigation in the High Court challenging the construction of this road through land declared as a heritage site under the Biological Diversity Act.

They contended that a public road slicing through the campus would affect not only its biodiversity but also sensitive experimental projects.

The High Court directed the government to constitute a high-level committee to resolve the issue. The committee, headed by Chief Secretary S.V. Ranganath, asked the authorities concerned on March 30, 2013 to shelve the project and restore the land to the university.

But local politicians and realtors had twice resisted moves by the university to close the road and take back the land. Irritated by this, the farmers had warned that they would come from across the State to the UAS-B campus to restore the land if the government fails to do so by May 20.

Farm schemes to be streamlined

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda on Tuesday said that the existing schemes of the Agriculture Department would be streamlined for effective implementation and to ensure that they reached farmers.

A day after assuming charge, Mr. Byre Gowda, who chaired a meeting of department officials and vice-chancellors of Universities Agricultural Sciences, said that the department has been implementing many schemes for the past several years. Keeping in mind farmers' interests, he said, a few schemes would be prioritised and simplified.

"Some schemes are outdated and a serious thought has to be given whether they should be continued or not," he said.

Noting that sowing activities are likely to commence in the second week of June, the Minister said that 10.68 lakh quintals of seeds have been procured for distribution among farmers at subsidised prices (50 per cent). All efforts would be made to achieve the growth rate of 4.5 per cent in the farm sector during the 12th Plan period, he said.

Asked about diversion of fertilizers during the kharif season, he said squads have been formed to crack down on illegal hoarding of nutrients by dealers.

On the proposal that had been floated by the BJP government to merge the Watershed Department with the Agriculture Department, he said a decision would be taken only after consultation with experts and officials. Area under watersheds would be increased to help farmers take up income generating activities.

He said that making agriculture a profitable occupation was a major challenge before the government. The farm sector has been adversely affected by shortage of power supply, erratic monsoon and high input costs. More technologies would be made available to farmers to enhance crop yield and to tackle pests, Mr. Byre Gowda said.

Asked whether schemes, including organic farming, launched by the BJP government would be continued, the Minister said that he had broadly reviewed the relevance of several schemes being implemented for the past several years.

“Organic farming is not a solution for ills grappling the farm sector. It is one of the farming methods adopted by farmers to reduce dependence on fertilizers,” he said.

‘We have an open mind on GM crops’

Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda has said that the department has an open mind on genetically modified (GM) crops, and it is left to farmers to make informed choices.

He told presspersons here on Tuesday that Bt cotton, first introduced in the State in the late 1990s, had helped farmers improve yields in an eco-friendly manner. “Nearly 90 per cent of farmers in the State are using Bt cotton seeds,” he said. “We must keep our minds open,” Mr. Byre Gowda said when asked to spell out the government’s stand on GM crops.

Supply seeds for free to farmers: KRRS

The Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene have appealed to the State government to provide farmers across the State with seeds and fertilizers for free and waive all types of farm loans since farmers were facing severe financial crisis owing to drought.

Memorandum

In a memorandum submitted to the government through Deputy Commissioner V.P. Ikkeri here on Tuesday, the members said that farmers had suffered huge losses in the last two years owing to failure of rain. Under such circumstances, it had become very difficult for them to purchase seeds and fertilizers for kharif cultivation.

Financial crisis

Farmers had failed to repay loans to banks and other financial institutions because of their financial crisis, they said.

State vice-president of the sangha and sene Bagenal Kotrabasappa, general secretary Bedareddy Basavareddy, Siddangouda Patil and others were present.

Training in horticulture

For the benefit of farmers, the Horticulture Training Centre, Lalbagh, Bangalore, is organising a 10-month training in horticulture exclusively for children from families engaged in farming. Ten

candidates would be selected from Kolar district. The last date to send in the applications is May 25 and interview will be on May 28. For details, contact the Office of the Deputy Director of Horticulture.

Coconut to be procured in all districts

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan has directed officials to extend the procurement of raw coconut to all districts.

An official release said here on Tuesday that Rs.12 crore had been transferred to the procurement agency Kerafed as working capital to cover areas under 600 Krishi Bhavans. The Minister said that coconut would continue to be procured at Rs.16 a kg, which was higher by Rs.2 from the price fixed by Nafed. If Kerafed incurs any losses, that will be made up by the government.

Action has already been taken to facilitate processing and transfer of procured coconuts to Nafed. Besides, it will also procure 30,000 tonnes of copra for its own use. Value-added products such as coconut powder, coconut milk, desiccated coconut, and coconut cream will be introduced in the market this year.

About 20,000 tonnes of raw coconuts had been procured till May 15.

Cotton bales gutted

An accidental fire in a private godown at Tirpally locality in Adilabad town on Tuesday reduced a large number of cotton bales to ashes. According to the police, the godown had over 3,000 bales that belonged to a private party when the fire broke.

Tobacco growers oppose FDI

The Flue Cured Virginia (FCV) Tobacco Growers Association of Andhra Pradesh has opposed the Central Government's proposal to allow Foreign Direct Investment in tobacco sector saying it would destabilise the industry.

In a petition sent to the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Anand Sharma, the association leaders, N. Subba Rao and P. S. Muralibabu said the FDI would pave the way for

free entry of Multi National Corporations (MNCs) in the garb of improving cultivation, hitting the livelihood of millions of growers.

The FDI would result in a loss to the ex-chequer from the existing level of Rs. 2,000 crores to an expected Rs. 5,660 crores in the next 3-4 years to come, they claimed. Moreover, these MNC's have been buying Indian tobacco through their strategic partners but have never invested in the crop development nor paid the tobacco growers well.

'Karnataka has open mind on GM crops'

The government has an open mind on the issue of genetically modified crops, and favours giving options for farmers to make informed choices, Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said today.

He said Bt cotton, first introduced in the state some one-and-half decades ago, has definitely benefitted farmers to improve yields in an eco-friendly manner. "That's why farmers have adopted it." As much as 90 per cent of farmers in Karnataka are using Bt cotton seeds.

Agricultural varisities in Dharwad and Raichur are presently working on improving the Bt cotton seeds. "We must keep our minds open," Byre Gowda said when asked to spell out the new government's stand on GM crops. "We must give him (farmer) the options; let him choose."

On organic farming, which was aggressively promoted by the previous BJP government, the minister, in reply to a query, said funds for such initiatives were perhaps misused but added that the subject comes under the Horticulture Department, which needs to inquire into it.

The minister said the government has geared up to supply seeds and fertiliser to farmers. Agriculture department has estimated that for the 2013 Kharif season, about 1.07 million quintals of seeds would be needed, which had been stocked. As against the requirement of 2.4 million tonnes of fertiliser, the government has a stock of 900,000 tonnes, which would continuously get replenished, he said.

The minister advised farmers not to over-use urea just because it was cheap saying such an approach would bring down the soil fertility. A special squad has been formed to crack down on elements who seek to create "artificial shortage" by hoarding, he said.

Byre Gowda also said though there are many schemes for farmers, the government would focus on those identified among them, rather than trying to implement all of them.

THE HINDU Business Line

Indian robusta bowls over Boston roasters

Indian robusta coffees have been received well at the Specialty Coffee Association of America meet held recently at Boston, US.

“With Boston being in close proximity to major coffee roasters in the US, the event was attended by a sizeable crowd,” Jawaid Akhtar, Chairman, Coffee Board told *Business Line*.

“Robustas are generally known to be harsh, but when American roasters tested our coffees, they were amazed to discover the mildness and aroma of Indian coffees,” he said.

The Coffee Board had taken up space at the specialty coffee association and visitors tasted liquid coffee, instead of coffee samples from different regions.

At the event, a session on “Emerging Markets in Specialty Coffee: India” was also held to educate the US roasters. The one-hour session mainly focused on why specialty coffee needs Indian robustas. The session was attended by about 70 roasters from the North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand.

Sunalini Menon, CEO, Coffeelab Ltd, talked about the distinct characteristics of Indian coffee and coffee growers’ representative Nishant Gurjer, Partner, Kaapi Royale Coffee, and Chairman of Karnataka Planters’ Association (KPA), spoke about the farm practices of cultivating coffee in India. The moderator of the event was Andrew Hetzel, consultant, CafeMakers.

The Indian delegation had, besides the Coffee Board Chairman and the KPA Chairman, quality control expert Sunalini Menon, M.P. Devaiah of Allana Sons, Bharat Mandanna of BBTC, Jacob Mammen of Bhadra Group, Kurien who was representing Small Coffee Growers Association, Kerala, and US coffee trader Joseph John.

For the last three to four years, the Coffee Board has been focussing on the US market.

“Roasters in US are increasingly using robustas in their blends, it is here we are focusing our attention to penetrate the most important market in the world,” said Gurjer.

Creating awareness of the Indian coffee in the US has led to gaining some ground in the market. Indian coffee exports to US are currently averaging at around 6,000 tonnes and is the 14th important market. Exports have doubled in the last five years. In 2008-09 exports stood at 2,556 tonnes.

Spot rubber rules steady in dull trade

Spot rubber continued to rule steady on Tuesday. There were no fresh factors specific to rubber to set a definite trend in the market. The sentiment remained neutral following an almost similar closing on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. Volumes were low.

On the global front scene, the Tokyo rubber futures extended gains into a third straight session, catalysed by optimism on global demand. But the gains were limited due to a rebound in the yen.

Spot sheet rubber closed unchanged at Rs 171 a kg, according to traders. The grade finished flat at Rs 170.50 at Kottayam and Kochi, as quoted by the Rubber Board.

June futures inched up to Rs 170 (Rs 169.97), July to Rs 169.75 (Rs 169.69), and August to Rs 167.60 (Rs 167.41). The September futures slipped to Rs 163.13 (Rs 164.80) and October to Rs 165.29 (Rs 165.33) on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) increased to Rs 166.94 (Rs 165.93) at Bangkok. Its May futures firmed up to ¥ 278.5 (Rs 149.96) in the night session on Tokyo Commodity Exchange

Spot rubber rates (Rs/kg) were: RSS-4: 171 (171) RSS-5: 167 (167); Ungraded: 161 (161); ISNR 20: 162 (162); and Latex 60%: 110 (110)

Technology makes tobacco sales simpler, but growers feel lost

Tobacco farmers, for long, have been mute spectators at auction sites.

Price-fixing by cartels has sidelined their role in the trade.

But today, they are equipped with technology that combines the power of mobility and bar-coding (a unique number and its visual depiction that can be read by scanners).

Each bale (of about 100 kg) is bar-coded and classified according to the quality. Traders' bids are immediately displayed on huge television screens, giving farmers real-time information, unlike the old system where traders had to shout the price.

Though the officials are trying to explain the benefits, farmers at the Torredu auction platform, one of the 19 platforms in the State, are yet to come to terms with the new system introduced by the Tobacco Board for the first time this season. NIIT Technologies has bagged the mandate to implement the system both in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

The auction process is now simple. The graded tobacco bales are kept in neat rows on the auction floor. The auction superintendent (a Tobacco Board official) stops at each bale, pulls out a few tobacco leaves to check the grade (F1, F 2, F3, etc) and states the opening price.

Then the buyers, representing tobacco exporters as well as cigarette manufacturers, punch in their bids secretly into their handsets and the prices are displayed on the screen. A few minutes later, the bale is awarded to the highest bidder.

"The biggest benefit is, the farmer will get income based on the international pricing. We expect that their incomes will go up by 15-25 per cent as the electronic systems remove subjectivity," NIIT Tech President Arvind Mehtrotra (Asia-Pacific and India), said.

Lost still

Though the process is simple, some farmers still feel lost. Veera Venkata Satyanarayana, a farmer at Torredu auction floor near Rajahmundry, says he is more comfortable with the old open auction as he could be at the spot watching the process.

"We have not seen any marked price increase after the e-auctions have been introduced. The buyers can still form syndicates and depress prices. Price fluctuations depend on the market dynamics, not the mode of auctions," says another farmer, also a Satyanarayana.

I.V.R.A Kumar, senior grading officer in charge, says, "I can certainly assert that e-auctions are more efficient and transparent than the old system. Our farmers have shown great resilience in adapting to changes."

[Commerce Ministry seeks hike in rubber import duty, again](#)



The Commerce Department wants the Finance Ministry to act fast on its recommendation for an increase in import duty on rubber to help domestic farmers deal with falling prices. Prices of rubber have fallen to about Rs 160 a kg from last year's Rs 230 a kg.

Commerce Secretary S.R. Rao met Revenue Secretary Sumit Bose recently to follow up on the issue, but was not given any assurance as to when the duty hike would be implemented, a Commerce Department official told *Business Line*.

The Commerce Department had suggested two months ago to the Revenue Department that specific import duty on rubber be increased to Rs 34 a kg from Rs 20 a kg, based on the average price prevailing in the past three years. It, however, did not suggest any change in the 20 per cent ad valorem duty.

Duty structure

Currently, importers can pay either 20 per cent import duty on the value of rubber or Rs 20 per kg of imports, whichever is lower.

"We had given our proposal for a re-calculation of import duty to the Revenue Department two months ago, after rubber farmers approached us with complaints of a fall in prices. We hope the Finance Ministry will respond soon," the official said.

Rubber farmers from Southern States had met Commerce Minister Anand Sharma in March and had pointed out that if import duties were not hiked, cheap rubber from neighbouring countries would flood the Indian market, further bringing down prices and may cause a domestic crisis.

Congress MPs from Kerala have already met Sharma to press for an increase in import duty on rubber to protect domestic farmers. Kerala accounts for about 90 per cent of the rubber produced in India.

MMTC cancels wheat export tender on poor response

Poor response has forced state-run MMTC to cancel the wheat export tender for shipping about one lakh tonnes from the Food Corporation of India godowns at Kakinada port on Tuesday.

MMTC received only a single bid for \$268 a tonne from global trader Glencore, much below the floor price of \$300 a tonne set by the Government. Official sources told *Business Line* that MMTC may re-float the tender some time soon.

MMTC's tender on Tuesday came almost after a gap of about 25 days. Now, it will be interesting to watch the kind of response that STC and PEC get for their tenders, due to be opened on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively. Two tenders of STC for exporting one lakh tonnes would be opened on Wednesday, while three tenders from PEC for shipment of 1.1 lakh tonnes are due on Thursday.

"Glencore's bid reflects the price for wheat shipment from Black Sea origin headed for the East Asian market," said Tejinder Narang, grains trade analyst. Seen in isolation, this response shows that nobody is short for the Far Eastern markets, he added.

State-run entities such as MMTC, STC and PEC have been floating export tenders to ship out wheat from Government stocks since July 2012. In the last financial year, these entities would have shipped out around three million tonnes from Government stocks, while exports by private traders stood around 2.6 million tonnes for the period.

In the current financial year starting April, exports from Government stocks stood at around 5 lakh tonnes, while shipments by private traders are estimated at 3-4 lakh tonnes, sources said.

Monsoon-related rain seen over Kerala coast

Rainfall related to the onset of monsoon has been forecast for the Kerala coast from Friday/Saturday, according to a US-based forecasting agency.

Climate Forecasting System of the US National Centres for Environmental Prediction made this forecast in its latest assessment of conditions evolving in the Arabian Sea.

JUNE RAINS

“India Met Department is forecasting onset of Southwest monsoon onset over Kerala coast around June 3rd, even though our model is predicting onset-related rainfall conditions around June 24-25,” the agency said.

It went on to add that the month of June is likely to witness a strong monsoon, with early indications that the rains might start to relent with beginning of July.

Back home, India Met Department said in its update on Tuesday that it too was expecting an increase in rainfall activity over Kerala, Karnataka and Lakshadweep from Friday.

Monsoon is likely to break over the Kerala coast by Monday/Tuesday (May 27/28), according to a former honcho of the Met Department, who did not wish to be identified.

India Met Department has already said that the onset of seasonal rains is likely to happen on June 3 with an error margin of four days to either side.

But the current build-up over Southeast Arabian Sea might just spring a surprise on the upside, as per the US agency forecast. Heat wave conditions are peaking over Northwest and adjoining Central India with a ‘tongue of flame’ extending right into East India.

Lull in western disturbance (low-pressure systems in North India) activity would allow the heating to become entrenched.

CORE HEATING

Air masses would rise and reduce pressure relative to the Southwest coast, inviting monsoon winds fan blow into land and bring rains along. The core of heating (‘heat low’) centred over Rajasthan with the ‘tongue to the East’ will eventually set up the all-important trough which the Bay of Bengal arm of monsoon would enter plains and farmlands.

Southwesterly winds would transport rain-bearing clouds along the Kerala coast to form the Arabian Sea arm of the monsoon.

It would meet with the Bay of Bengal arm over Central India later into the season.

Groundnut oil may slip further



Prices of groundnut oil are likely to decline this week on account of anticipated rise in arrivals and higher prices besides an almost nil demand from brands.

A Rajkot-based miller said, “At present demand from brands is almost nil. With this new crop of summer groundnut has started to arrive in the market which also pressurised the groundnut oil price. Prices may decline further.”

Groundnut oil lost Rs 100 for 15 kg during the past one week on waning demand.

According to traders, brands are inactive in groundnut oil. Moreover, arrival of new summer crop, too, has impacted the price.

Cotton oil also eased on Tuesday.

Groundnut oil for 15 kg was down by Rs 20 at Rs 1,905-1,910 while groundnut oil *telia* tin declined Rs 38 to Rs 1,625-1,630 and loose groundnut oil decreased Rs 25 to Rs 1,055-1,060 for 10 kg.

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

Cotton oil wash price was steady at Rs 602-605 for 10 kg and cotton oil new tin price moved down Rs 10 to Rs 1,070-1,080 for 15 kg.

About 20-25 tankers were traded in cotton oil from Saurashtra's mills.

According to an edible oil retailer, other edible oils such as cotton oil, palm and soya oil are cheaper than groundnut oil and so people prefer them to the costlier groundnut oil.

Selling pressure eases in pepper



Pepper prices continued to head south on bearish sentiments on Tuesday in the trading at IPSTA. The market was volatile and the selling pressure was waning out, market sources told *Business Line*.

Prices of all the running contracts – June, July and August – ended lower.

Exporters from Kerala were buying Karnataka pepper under H form and also from the high ranges.

With the month-long strike by Maharashtra traders coming to an end, the masala manufacturers based in the major centres – Nagpur, Mumbai, Pune, Jhalgaon and Nasik – have started buying and that in turn has activated the demand for pepper, they said.

On the spot, 75 tonnes of pepper arrived and 80 tonnes were traded.

June contract on the IPSTA was down by Rs 188 to close at Rs 34,680 a quintal. July decreased by Rs 444 to close at Rs 34,756.

August dropped by Rs 32 to close at 34,968 a quintal.

Total turnover increased by 74 tonnes to 140 tonnes.

However, the open interest was claimed to be at 100 tonnes today but that needs to be highlighted on the screen, the trade pointed out.

Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 33,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 35,000 (MG 1) a quintal on matching demand and supply.

Indian parity in the international market dropped to around \$6,500 a tonne (c&f) following drop in prices coupled with weakening of the rupee against the dollar today, they added.

Wheat seen trading in tight range



Wheat futures are likely to trade in a tight range in the coming days while dara wheat in physical market is also likely to move without much fluctuation, according to traders.

Around 3,000 bags of wheat arrived at the Karnal Grain Market Terminal on Tuesday. The quality of the stock was medium but Government agencies were not there for procurement.

In the physical market, dara wheat went up by Rs 5 and quoted at Rs 1,405-1,410 a quintal. Mill delivery was at Rs 1,405, while delivery at the chakki was at Rs 1,410.

Desi wheat variety was sold at Rs 2,300. After ruling flat for more than two weeks, dara wheat improved marginally by Rs 5 a quintal on domestic demand, said Satish Kumar, a wheat trader.

In Delhi's Lawrence road market, a benchmark for the country, wheat mill quality traded at Rs 1,490-1,530.

On the NCDEX, June contracts traded up on futures market on buying interest. Wheat for June contracts increased by Rs 8 and traded at 1,562 with an open interest of 25,020 lots.

According to the market experts, fresh buying by flour mills to meet the season demand pushed wheat futures upwards. While, wheat spot prices on the exchange traded at Rs 1,405.

Flour Prices

Despite an uptrend in wheat, flour remained unchanged and quoted at Rs 1,670. Similarly, Chokar ruled flat and sold at Rs 1,250-1,275 a quintal.

Cheaper varieties from AP hurt Erode turmeric



Arrival of cheaper varieties from Nizamabad and lack of North Indian orders have hurt the prospects of turmeric.

“After a few days break, again the turmeric is arriving to Erode from Nizamabad, as the price of the turmeric is Rs 1,000 a quintal lower than Erode market price. But buyers have to spend at least Rs 300 a quintal to polish the same. By this process the trader is gaining reasonably, so they are quoting low price for Erode turmeric,” said the turmeric growers.

Traders said that usually during this period they will get ample number of orders from North India. However, this year virtually no upcountry orders have been received by traders. But they are buying very limited stocks to fulfil their already committed orders and also to the local masala firms.

Arrivals have increased to 4,010 bags of which 60 per cent was sold. Prices of some 30 bags of the hybrid variety was increased by Rs 300 a quintal and the remaining 200 bags were decreased by Rs 150 a quintal. The price of the finger variety showed an increase of Rs 100 in regulated market committee, but in Erode and Gobichettipalayam cooperative societies prices decreased by Rs 100.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,399-7,129; the root variety Rs 4,017-6,195 a quintal.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 5,899-7,629; the root variety Rs 5,366-6,614. Of the arrival of 1,086 bags, only 40 per cent was sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety quoted Rs 5,159-7,066; the root variety Rs 4,899-6,316. Of the 363 bags that arrived, 344 were traded.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,801-6,936 and the root variety Rs 5,689-6,093. Of the 500 bags put up for sale, 477 found takers.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 5,750-7,410; the root variety Rs 4,650-6,612. All the 110 bags were sold.

INDIAN CITIES

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Today's Weather



Sunny

Wednesday, May 22

Max 45° | Min 28°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 18

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:27

Sunset: 07:08

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Sunny

Thursday, May 23

Max 45° | Min 30°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

May 24



45° | 30°

Sunny

Saturday

May 25



43° | 31°

Sunny

Sunday

May 26



44° | 33°

Sunny

Monday

May 27



43° | 33°

Sunny

Tuesday

May 28



44° | 32°

Sunny

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:27

Humidity: 18

Sunset: 07:08

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003



THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Agriculture in decline: Prabhat Patnaik

Agriculture, the backbone of the country, is in a decline due to various factors such as rainfall, pricing of food grains and middlemen issues. At this juncture we need a peasant-led, agriculture-led policy through which we can support the peasantry of our country, said eminent economist Prabhat Patnaik.

Dr Patnaik, economist and former professor, CESP, Jawaharlal Nehru University, recently arrived in Chennai to address the national convention on 'Strengthening Public Health – Medical System for People', organised by the Save Children Movement, a wing of the Tamil Nadu Health Development Association, Chennai.

Patnaik in his keynote address said, "India is always seen as an emerging economic power centre among Asian countries. But in the last decade the nation is witnessing a magnitude of poverty, albeit the Planning Commission denies the fact."

"In India poverty is defined in terms of calorie intake by people. It has been defined as below 2,100 calories in urban areas for a person per day and 2,400 calories in rural areas for a person per day. The government says that during the neo-liberalisation reforms of the past decade the economy has developed. But the government's own record says in 1973-74 urban India's intake of calories less than 2,100 was 60 per cent, in 1983-84 58.5 per cent, in 1993-94 57 per cent and in 2004-05 64.5 per cent. As per the records of the National Sample Survey in 2009-2010 it was 73 per cent," he said.

"Likewise in the rural areas the intake of calories less than 2,400 was 56.4 per cent in 1973-74, 56 per cent in 1983-84, 58.5 per cent in 1993-94, 69.5 per cent in 2004-05 and in 2009-2010 it went up to 76 per cent. This data shows that there is absolute poverty during precisely the "period of high growth" described by the government," he said.

"There are arguments that the annual per capita intake of food grains by the population has gone up. But that is not true of India. In the US the intake of food grains both directly and indirectly was as high as 900 kg per day, while India's per capita consumption is still not equal to that at the start of the 19th century. In the early years of the 19th century the per capita

consumption of food grains in India was 200 kg. But it y declined to 140 kg at the time of Independence, was 180 kg post-Independence and is 160 kg now,” he said.

“The new economic policy had its impact also on employment. The nation did not achieve ‘decent employment’ as it is put by the International Labour Organisation. India witnesses 0.88 per cent growth per year in eradicating unemployment. Saying the nation has informal and casual employment opportunities is just ‘camouflage’,” he said.

“Today India’s economic condition is characterised by two factors — the ‘primitive accumulation of capital’ described by Karl Marx, which literally pushes the peasantry out of agriculture, and the growth in the ‘reserve army of labour’ also described by Marx. We need a complete change in policy which will take the peasantry into account,” Patnaik concluded.

Government will crack down on artificial fertiliser scarcity'

In a bid to check misuse of funds and monitor progress of ongoing development works in the Agriculture Department, tech-savvy Agriculture Minister Krishna Byre Gowda has decided to use satellite imagery to ascertain that development projects are physically executed by the Watershed Department.

Gowda said this will put an end to the practice of claiming bills for many projects that are still on paper. The government also plans to involve NGOs in the execution and monitoring of watershed programmes, he added.

Speaking after assuming charge as Agriculture Minister at Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday, he said, “There is a mafia involved in creating artificial scarcity (of fertilisers) during the sowing season to exploit farmers. We have decided to set up special squads with the assistance of Union government officials to act against fertiliser mafia and crush it with an iron hand.” He said the state has nine lakh tonnes of Urea as against the demand of 24 lakh tonnes and expressed confidence that the government will meet the farmers’ requirements. He also sent a strong message to officials by clarifying that the government would not tolerate or compromise with corrupt and inefficient officers.

He disclosed that the state has 10.68 tonnes of seeds as against a requirement of 11 lakh tonnes.

Gowda said he wants to follow in the footsteps of his father Byre Gowda, inspect the works and take decisions on the spot. The government plans to educate farmers on judicious use of water to maintain fertility of soil, he noted. He said the new government is in favour of organic farming

and it has earmarked `300 crore for promoting organic farming. "There are charges of misuse of funds. I will prevail upon the Chief Minister to order a probe into the misappropriation of funds." The government is examining a proposal to merge the Watershed Department with the Agriculture Department, he said.

Decentralised Industrial Policy

Gowda said he is against the acquisition of fertile and irrigated land for industrial development. He said industries should be promoted in dry lands as most the youths in rural areas are looking towards industries for employment. "I prefer decentralised industrialization to help people from the farming community getting into industries without migrating the urban pockets," he said. Asked about promoting GM seeds, he said farmers have accepted Bt cotton seeds and have cultivated them for the past 15 years. "Though the use of Bt cotton seeds has minimised the use of pesticides, there is a need for further focus on increasing yield," he added.

'Will Introduce Uniform Sand Policy'

Mysore: A uniform sand policy will be introduced to end sand mafia in the state, Public Works Department (PWD) Minister H C Mahadevappa said on Tuesday. After visiting Suttur Mutt, he said the rise in commercialisation of sand is taking a toll on environment, health and drinking water. Hence, steps will be taken to ensure that transportation of sand is not a murky business, he said. Mahadevappa said works on widening Mysore-Nanjangud Road into four-lane may begin shortly as the Centre has completed the survey. Stating that PWD is an important Department, the minister said he will try and maintain transparency in its activities and will ensure quality and timely completion of works.

'Medical Colleges in All Districts'

Gulbarga: The State government is thinking of establishing one government medical college in each district, Minister of State for Medical Education Dr Sharanaprakash Patil said here on Tuesday. Speaking to reporters, Dr Patil said it is the long standing demand of the people of the district that government should establish a government medical college in Gulbarga. "There is sufficient space in the Gulbarga District Government Hospital Complex to construct the building for medical college and moreover, the district hospital has all infrastructure facilities," he added.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

'Foodgrain procurement policy needs review'

NEW DELHI: Finance minister [P Chidambaram](#) has reopened the debate on massive stocking of foodgrains by government agencies resulting in crowding out of the private sector from the market and called for a review of the practice.

"An often neglected area of competition policy is public procurement. In the case of agriculture, the [minimum support price](#) (MSP) and open-ended procurement have served our farmers well... Currently, as a result of how the MSP and procurement policy are set, the government is the largest and in many ways the only bulk buyer of cereals. But, in the process, it is crowding out private sector procurement. "The discovery of market prices for cereals is affected by government policy. What role should competition policy play in bringing private players into procurement and in improving the benefits to both the farmer and the consumer? The role of competition policy in improving procurement is a question we need to debate," the minister said on Monday evening while delivering the inaugural address on the annual day of Competition Commission of India.

Chidambaram's statement assumes significance as there was a proposal within the Competition Commission to probe [Food Corporation of India](#) but investigation was not pursued.

Credit crunch hits Vidarbha farmers

NAGPUR: Namdeo Gandhewar, a resident of Pumpri village in Yavatmal, committed suicide on Monday by consuming pesticide to become this year's 268th farmer in Vidarbha to end his life, unable to bear the burden of debt and [credit crunch](#). Farm activists said Namdeo's case is symptomatic of the plight of farmers in the region ahead of the sowing season.

The 47-year-old farmer had reportedly taken a loan of Rs 40,000 from Bank of Maharashtra last year. This year, under pressure from bankers to repay the loan, he cleared the dues. But the

nationalized bank officials had not issued him fresh credit even as time was running out for the start of kharif operations.

"He was asked to wait till next month for fresh credit," said Kishore Tiwari, president of [Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti](#), which keeps track of the agrarian crisis that has been endemic to the region for over a decade, driving hundreds of cotton farmers to death.

"The Amravati divisional commissioner's appeal to nationalized bank officials to take a proactive stance and expedite farm credit disbursal on priority seems to have fallen on deaf ears," said Tiwari. According to him, only 10% of the targeted Rs 5,200 crore farm loan target has been disbursed among farmers with less than two weeks left for arrival of rains.

"To make matters worse, cooperative banks in the region are hamstrung. Major district cooperative banks are led by government appointed administrators The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development ([NABARD](#)) should intervene to bail out the farmers," said Tiwari. He also pointed out that even as crop season was nearing, there was no rush at farm input stores. "This is because farmers do not have cash to make even the necessary purchases," he said.

Crops affected in storm-hit Nadia

Nadia: Cultivation of boro, jute and sesame crops have taken a hit in various gram panchayats of Nadia due to the recent hailstorm. Thirty-eight mouzas in 10 gram panchayats of Hanskhali, Chapra and Krishnagar 1 blocks were affected.

According to the district [agriculture department](#), 2893 metric tons (MT) of marsh rice sown on 1097 hectares of land in the three blocks were damaged, leading to a loss of Rs 298 lakh. While 2286 MT of jute from 1034 hectares of land got damaged incurring a loss of Rs 137.18 lakh, sesame crops of 326 MT sown on 450 hectares of land was destroyed, leading to a Rs50-lakh loss. With 50% of damage reported from 12 mouzas of Hanskhali and six of Krishnagar, the

district administration has announced these as hailstorm-battered storms.

The affected cultivators will be given seeds, medicines, fertilizers, cost of preparing land for farming and seed plantation by the district administration.

Cotton to fetch more rates coming season

NAGPUR: Cotton, a major cash crop of Vidarbha, holds promise of better income for farmers in the next kharif season as compared to the previous year crop. Rates that ranged between Rs4000 and Rs4500 a quintal last season may go up this time to at least Rs5000. This is because of a growing demand for the commodity amid trend of decreasing yields and shrinkage in cultivation area.

Thanks to lower rates to the crop last year, the area under cotton is likely to dip not only in India but also in the US and China, the other two major cotton growers. "The global cotton crop area was 34.1 million hectares in 2012-13. In 2013-14, according to [International Cotton Advisory Council](#) (ICAC) projections the cotton crop is likely to be grown in 32.5 million ha. Consequently the cotton yield globally is likely to dip from last year's 26.3 million tonnes to 24.6 million tonnes in the coming cotton season," Maharashtra state cotton growers cooperative marketing federation chairman NP Hirani said here on Monday.

"On the other hand global consumption from textile mills, which was 23.7 MT is expected to increase to 24.3 MT," said Hirani. According to him this augurs well for cotton growers concentrated in Vidarbha where cotton is grown in around 4 million hectares. In India too the area may shrink from last season's 121 lakh ha to 117 lakh ha. "Last year farmers could hardly earn anything more than what they spent on the crop. This time around they can at least earn a moderate income. But in realistic terms, the farmer should get a price of around Rs6000 a quintal to make income that would see him through comfortably for the rest of the year," said Hirani.

A state-level crop pricing committee headed by [state agriculture minister](#) RK Vikhe-Patil comprising vice-chancellors of state farm varsities and some opposition and ruling party nominees has been formed. This committee is expected to recommend to the Centre a higher minimum support price for cotton, said Hirani.

Meanwhile, the cotton federation which diversified to seed marketing last year has fixed a target of 3 lakh packs for the kharif season. Last year, on trial basis the federation had sold only 11,000 packets (each of 450 gm Bt cotton seeds). But Hirani claimed, based on reports of very good yields for the Mahacot brand of seeds introduced by them, they can get a good response. Around 200 graders of the federation will fan through villages selling the Mahacot and the two new varieties Mahacot Super and Jal (for irrigated lands) being introduced this year, said Hirani.