



TNAU to offer integrated Ph.D. programmes in four disciplines

External Ph.D. in 26 disciplines offered for professionals

Emulating the spirit of research at the Indian Institutes of Technology, the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University seeks to give an impetus to post-graduate and doctoral studies. In what is said to be a first for any State agricultural university, TNAU says its will offer an Integrated Ph.D. programme in four disciplines – agronomy, plant breeding and genetics, agricultural entomology and agricultural microbiology. An external Ph.D. programme in 26 disciplines will also be offered to only professionals.

According to Dean of the School of Post-Graduate Studies, C. Udayasoorian, the four-year Integrated Ph.D. integrates a three-year Ph.D. programme with a year of post-graduate coursework in generic research training and discipline-specific research content.

“Graduates opting for this programme should have a Cumulative Grade Point Average of above 8.5 and should be willing to focus more on research. It also saves a year’s time for them,” he said.

The External Ph.D. is offered to candidates who have two years of experience in any R&D organisation. TNAU permits the candidates to pursue the doctoral programme at their organisation itself under a research supervisor, approved by TNAU, in any of the 26 disciplines. The candidates will be given time between four and eight years to complete the thesis.

“Both the Ph.D. programmes are unique and are in great demand. These are available only in institutions that enjoy the stature of IITs. We expect more than 100 candidates to join the first batch of External Ph.D. The programmes will have an edge over the regular doctoral programmes,” the Dean said.

The university is also inviting applications from eligible candidates for admission to masters’ programmes in 39 disciplines and regular Ph. D. programmes in 26 disciplines.

The new addition in the PG courses is the master's programme in Molecular Plant Breeding.

The programmes are offered at the university as well as its constituent colleges in Coimbatore, Madurai, Killikulam, Periyakulam, and Mettupalayam.

APPLICATION DEADLINES

Applications can be downloaded from the website www.tnau.ac.in. Last date for receipt of applications for master's programme is June 29, and that for doctoral programmes is July 22. All correspondence will be done electronically. Candidates can check the university website/e-mail for updates.

TN moves SC against Karnataka seeking damages for loss of crops

The Tamil Nadu government has filed a suit in the Supreme Court seeking about Rs. 2,500 crore damages from Karnataka for loss of samba and kuruvai crops in the State due to the non-release of water by Karnataka as per the distress water-sharing formula of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal's interim award.

In its suit, Tamil Nadu also sought a direction to Karnataka to release 53.18 tmcft of water - the shortfall during the previous water year. The State pointed out that in the last 21 years there was no voluntary release of waters from the reservoirs during the crucial months of June to September as per the Interim Order of the Tribunal. The scheme framed by the Central government, for the implementation of the Interim Order, had failed to ensure and protect the rights of inhabitants of the Plaintiff State.

"The plaintiff states that the first defendant, while not adhering to the stipulated release of water as per the Interim Order of the Tribunal, also appropriated all the waters of the river in Karnataka. There has been no voluntary release of water by the first defendant, to comply with the orders of the Tribunal, at any point of time in the last 21 years, except when certain directions were issued by this Court, or when the reservoirs were overflowing due to heavy rain. The State of Karnataka has not been ensuring the stipulated monthly releases during the crucial months to Tamil Nadu."

The suit further stated the water year 2012-2013 was a low flow year and, as per the order of the Tribunal, the distress situation should have been shared on pro-rata basis.

“It has been assessed by the Cauvery Monitoring Committee (CMC) that there is a shortfall of 39.7 per cent in the total inflows received in the four major reservoirs of Karnataka during June to December, 2012.”

Drawing a comparison with power, Tamil Nadu said, “With regard to power, which is a major requirement of the State, regulations have been made to ensure that electricity is drawn by the Board or State utility, in accordance with a schedule which is fixed in advance by the National /State /Regional dispatch centre. The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission has framed regulations in 2009, which, inter alia, provides for limits on UI volume and the consequences of exceeding the limits of the drawl by providing for additional Unscheduled Interchange (UI) charges for such overdrawal. Thus, applying the same principle, the State of Karnataka in the event of overdrawal of water more than that stipulated by the Tribunal or retains the waters due to the plaintiff State, should be obliged to cause reparations by payment of damages, as also supply of shortfall in the quantum of water. Karnataka is also obliged to pay punitive damages for repeated, wanton, deliberate failure to fulfill their obligations, more so when they have made unlawful gains at the cost of farmers of Tamil Nadu.”

It sought a direction to Karnataka to pay damages to the tune of Rs. 1,045.70 crores towards loss of crops, loss of bio mass and loss of power generation, on account of non-release of water during the irrigation year 2012-2013 as per the pro rata share of waters as per the Interim Order notified on 10.12.1991; to pay punitive damages of Rs. 1,434 crores for deliberate non-compliance of the decision passed by the Tribunal and to direct Karnataka to release 53.18 TMC ft. being the shortfall at Mettur Reservoir for the water year 2012-2013 as computed on the pro rata formula.

A story of a banker turned farmer in Bihar



Direct sales: Barun Singh (foreground) markets the produce grown in his farm directly to consumers.— Photo: Special Arrangement

“Farming is fascinating. The only thing is that it requires continuous hard-work and devotion without any distraction” says Mr. Barun Singh, a government bank manager-turned-farmer. Mr. Barun Singh maintains a vermi-composting unit in a portion of his 10 acre land. A dairy unit is attached to the composting unit so that the cattle dung can be easily utilized for the process without much labour involvement.

Waste materials like dried leaves, rotten vegetables, fruits etc is spread on a polythene sheet placed on the ground and then covered with cattle dung. Tanks are made of bricks and cement with small holes to facilitate easy movement of earthworms from one tank to another and effective collection of vermi-wash.

Net profit

“The farmer made a net profit of Rs. 12 lakh from his composting unit alone which included sales of above Rs. 25 lakh in the States of Bihar and Jharkhand together with supplies to the government in 2012 and in the current year, he expects a net profit of Rs. 15 lakh since the demand for organic inputs in Bihar is quite high,” says Mr. Aditya, Assistant Professor-cum-Junior Scientist, Department of Extension Education, Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bihar, who is working on an action research to catalyze rural leadership for better dissemination of information.

In addition to this Mr. Barun has maintained a two-acre farm exclusively for the cultivation of tissue culture banana through high density planting (HDP) technique. “Two months old plants are growing even better than the normal banana cultivars planted at the same time in other plots,” says Mr. Barun.

High Density Planting (HDP), an advance technique, is an effective method used to improve the fruit productivity. Through HDP 4,000 to 5,000 plants can be planted in a hectare and the yield improves radically.

HDP technique

According to Mr. Aditya, this technique is more useful for perennial crops because it allows efficient use of land and resources, realizing higher yield and net profit, easy canopy

management suited for farm mechanization, and cultural practices, efficient spray and weed control, improvement in fruit quality easy and good harvest.

In India, HDP technology has been successfully used in banana, pineapple, papaya and mango, guava and citrus where the yield has increased two to three times.

The combination of dairying with over 30 high yielding cows of Sahiwal, Jarsi and Holstein-Friesian breed along with 28 calves, goatery with Jamapari breed of goats brought from Rajasthan, fishery in 0.75 acres of land with mix-carp variety of fish and short-duration tissue culture banana plant, maize and vegetable crops like bottle gourd, potato, lady's finger are grown in his farm.

Sale of milk

From dairying alone, he is able to sale over 180 litres of milk each day fetching over Rs. 1.70 lakhs per month.

The carp fish has great demand in the local market and the state capital. The demand often exceeds the supply. It is a good source to meet current expenses incurred day to day on his farm

The best part is that the crops are grown completely by organic means with no use of chemical fertilizers.

Marketing

The vegetables produced from the farm are packed and sent to different parts of the state as well as the local market. Along with it, he owns a mustard processing plant to extract oil and use mustard bran as a nutritious concentrate feed for cattle," says Mr. Aditya.

"More than 80 per cent of Indian farmers have small farm holdings. The success of an agricultural research programme or project must be on increasing productivity and income to the small farmer," he adds.

Mr. Barun was conferred the best Innovative Farmer Award by the university last year for his sustained efforts and leadership qualities in guiding other farmers in the region.

Rural leaders

“My dream is to intensify my current activities in the coming years to give it a shape of an agro-industry and also form a club of rural-leaders who would be trained by the University for working in the area of farming they desire,” says Mr. Barun.

For visits and more information, readers can contact: Mr. Barun P. Singh, Gram: Patwaha, Block: Kehra, Dist, Saharsa, Bihar, Mobile :08809419388 and Mr. Aditya, Assistant Professor-cum-Junior Scientist, Department of Extension Education, Bihar Agricultural University, Sabour, Bihar. email:inc.aditya@gmail.com, mobile: 9798649444.

In need of a silk revolution

Assam needs to increase the output of its own silk yarns in order to save it from the onslaught of cheap import varieties



NATURAL SILKS:Eri, muga, tussar and mulberry are found in Assam.PHOTO: RITU RAJ KONWAR

Sericulture and weaving always have been traditional pursuits for the rural Assamese people, supplementing their agricultural incomes as well as fulfilling their personal requirements of cloth. Environmentally, Assam is the only place in the world suitable for producing all the four varieties of natural silks -- eri, muga, mulberry and tussar. Despite these distinct advantages of having a traditional cottage industry, eco-friendly climate for producing raw silks and availability of skilled man-power, the indigenous silk industry and its niche product for centuries 'Assam silk' is today struggling to survive.

Ostensibly the problem seems to be market oriented where the demand for Assam silk is diminishing because it is costlier in comparison to the silks from outside the State, particularly Benares. But this is misleading because cost wise there is not much difference in the prices of

the fabrics produced in any of the noted silk manufacturing centers of the country including Sualkuchi when the fabrics are woven out of natural silk yarns. It is only when fabrics are woven out of natural silk yarns blended with cheap imported Chinese silk or artificial/synthetic silk yarns that a significant difference in the cost of the fabric occurs. Taking undue advantage of this cost difference and the customers' ignorance unscrupulous traders have been indulging in profiteering by passing off blended products as pure silk fabrics. The worst sufferers of this duplicity are the silk weavers, who, for survival, are forced to make distress sales of their genuine products at throwaway prices to the bulk buyers/mahajans, who have a stranglehold on the market. This was the root cause of the recent disturbances in the silk town of Sualkuchi. Therefore the threat to Assam silk is not from Benarasi silk but from duplicate silk fabrics being sold as real silk, a trend which is not confined only to Assam. In reality there is a growing demand for all the varieties of Assam silk in the domestic, national and international markets. For instance, the demand for muga, a monopoly of Assam, has been growing with its increasing popularity in India and abroad. It is now a high end fashion fabric commanding premium prices. The market for eri, another exclusive silk of Assam, which was earlier restricted because of its poor quality and limited uses, has also grown with improved technology appreciably upgrading the quality. Today eri is one of the most economic and durable silk fabrics with multiple uses. Its excellent thermal properties and suitability for blending with wool has also made it a popular fabric for the colder climes in India and abroad. Moreover eri is the only natural silk that does not involve the killing of a living organism as it is not extracted from larvae. It is therefore preferred all over the world by Buddhists and conservationists. Even though mulberry silk is not exclusive to Assam it is in demand among the connoisseurs of Assam "paat" because of its unique texture. Unfortunately the indigenous silk industry has not been able to exploit this market potential because of which it is in the doldrums.

A deficient production because of a shortage of silk yarns is the main reason for the inability to meet the growing demand. Against a total domestic demand for silk yarns of 26,000 tons (MT) the country produces only 18,370 MT. The shortfall is made up by imports from China and the less expensive synthetic silk yarns from Japan and Italy. The problem has been further aggravated by the decline in the production of mulberry silk; the most widely used natural silk, in

Karnataka. Karnataka which is the biggest producer of mulberry silk in the country has seen a steady decline in its area of mulberry cultivation because of rapid urbanization, industrialization and a shortage of agricultural labour. Consequently prices of mulberry silk yarns have been skyrocketing and Assam which is heavily dependent on Mysore silk yarns for its production has been caught in this vicious cycle of decreasing supplies and increasing prices.

The only way to salvage the situation is to increase the State's own production of silk yarns. In the long run this will curtail the dependence on imported yarns, ensure regular supply of yarns to the local weavers at reasonable rates and make the finished products more price competitive. Fortunately, unlike Karnataka, the basic parameters for sericulture in the State are still favorable. The climate is still suitable for silk rearing, the cultivable areas are still untouched by urbanization or industrialization and a sizable section of the rural population is still involved in rearing and weaving. At present almost 20,000 hectares of land are in use for muga, mulberry and eri cultivation involving 2.6 lakh families in more than 10,000 villages of the State. While according to the 2012/2013 Economic Survey Report of Assam the State has 13 lakh handlooms which provide direct and indirect employment to around 25 lakh people. Utilized properly this dormant potential can transform the rural economy of Assam.

Even though every year both the State and Central governments initiate numerous schemes and spend huge amounts for the development of sericulture and weaving, the results have been disappointing. In 2011/2012 Assam produced a total of 2109 MT of raw silk as follows: Eri- 1976 MT, Muga- 115 MT and Mulberry- 18 MT. However the efforts have been grossly inadequate given the magnitude and gravity of the problem. Compare this to the fact that Assam had recorded a muga production of 95 MT way back in 1957; or Karnataka's production of almost 10,000 MT of mulberry silk annually; or new entrant Andhra Pradesh's annual output of mulberry silk of 4500 MT. Perhaps the enormity of the situation may be better understood from the fact that Sualkuchi alone has a yearly requirement of 2000 MT and 98 MT of mulberry and muga silk yarns respectively. Therefore all out efforts are needed to increase the output of silk yarns, particularly mulberry and muga, in the State.

For a start the entire sericulture and weaving sector must be better organized and streamlined from the grass-roots to the showroom so that the scope for the exploitation of farmers and

weavers by middle men is removed. Some measures which can make a significant difference are increasing the acreage under sericulture, establishing modern infrastructure for sericulture and weaving, supply of quality seeds and feeds for silk worms, regular lab to field projects to educate farmers and weavers on scientific methods and new technology to improve quality and boost outputs, frequent grass-root level awareness programs about government schemes and funds with a single window service to avail these facilities, soft loans to farmers and weavers from banks to undertake schemes etc. These are some long term initiatives which if implemented properly can yield permanent results.

Agitations by beleaguered weavers for supply of subsidized yarns and free electricity, procurement of finished products at remunerative prices by government agencies, banning of silk fabrics from outside etc. are short terms measures that may provide temporary relief but will permanently cripple the indigenous silk industry as a whole. In the era of globalization and an open market economy the leitmotif should be more production and not more protection. To save Assam silk, perhaps Assam needs a sericulture revolution involving small silk growers just like the small growers revolution in tea.

Ryots protest for crop insurance

Farmers of Brahmanapalle village in Pulivendula mandal staged a dharna before Andhra Pragathi Grameena Bank branch at Pulivendula on Wednesday alleging that crop insurance was not sanctioned to all the 92 ryots who paid crop insurance premium, owing to negligence of the bank officials.

Former Minister Y.S. Vivekananda Reddy and YSR Congress leader Y.S. Bhaskar Reddy expressed support to the protesting farmers and squatted with them in front of the bank branch. Mr. Vivekananda Reddy apprised APGB Regional Manager Pratap Reddy over telephone and urged him to take steps to ensure sanction of crop insurance and he was said to have assured to resolve the issue within a month.

The protesters said they incurred crop losses and were perturbed at non-sanction of crop insurance. Repeated representations to bank officials failed to yield any results, they lamented. The ryots ended their protest after the former Minister elicited a response from the bank officials.

Make use of technology, Minister tells farmers

Stresses on river linkage for providing water for irrigation



Endowments Minister C. Ramachandraiah, MLAs and officials going round the stalls put up at the 'Rythu Sadassu' at Rajampet on Wednesday.- Photo: By Arrangement

Minister for Endowments C. Ramachandraiah exhorted farmers on Wednesday to adopt new farming techniques by gaining awareness of the technological upgradation in the agriculture sector and achieve higher crop yields.

River water linkage was required to provide water for irrigation as well as drinking water, he said after inaugurating a Rythu Sadassu at the Rajampet Sub-Collector office premises. More water would be available for agriculture if States shed the policy of not parting with water to other States, he remarked. Farmers should raise crops gauging the seasonal conditions and develop to the level of fixing the price of their produce, he said.

“Rainfall has become scanty due to indiscriminate felling of trees and farmers should don the responsibility of growing trees to get a good rainfall”, Mr. Ramachandraiah said.

Farmers should utilise all the schemes meant for development of agriculture and officials should hone up farmers' knowhow on the technological advances in agriculture sector, he said.

An agricultural budget was introduced in 1998 after the demand was raised in Parliament and Rs. 1,627 crore was earmarked for providing succour to farmers affected by natural calamities, the Minister said.

Farmers should not shed agriculture and depend on other sectors for eking out livelihood, he observed.

“Everybody should strive for development of agriculture sector as 68 per cent of people are dependent on agriculture. Officials should resolve the problems of farmers and pass on subsidy properly to them”, he said.

Apprise the government

YSR Congress MLA from Railway Kodur segment, K. Srinivasulu, urged the Minister to apprise the Government to bail out farmers from the prevalent crisis.

YSRC MLA from Rajampet, A. Amarnath Reddy, said such ‘sadassus’ would create awareness among farmers. He demanded disbursal of crop loss compensation for 2010, 2011 and the current year.

He told Mr. Ramachandraiah to take steps to grant compensation for mango crop losses.

In-charge District Collector K. Nirmala lamented that farmers were drifting away from the agriculture sector by feeling that agriculture was not a beneficial avocation, even as population was growing rapidly.

She advised model farmers to enlighten farmers on farming techniques. Farmers should take up horticulture for getting higher subsidy, she suggested.

Rajampet Sub-Collector Preethi Meena told farmers to optimally utilise several new schemes being implemented for them.

Joint Director of Agriculture G. Jonathan and officials also spoke. Artistes performed a folk show to enlighten farmers.

The Minister, MLAs and officials went around the stalls put up by farmers, vegetable growers, mechanised farming equipment and cattle displayed in the ‘sadassu’.

Fluctuating ginger price may stabilise by harvest time

The price may be around Rs. 4,000 a quintal in November-December



In demand:Ginger price is now fluctuating upwards of Rs. 11,000 a quintal owing to shortfall in production.— File Photo

The price of ginger, which is presently very high owing to shortfall in production, is expected to firm up around Rs. 4,000 a quintal by the harvest season, according to a price-forecast study.

To help farmers decide whether to opt for ginger cultivation this season or not, the Market Intelligence Cell of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, took up an early survey of traders and collected the modal prices of ginger in Bangalore market in the last 11 years besides conducting an econometric analysis to forecast the price of ginger when the crop comes up for harvesting in November-December.

The survey indicates that the khariff season ginger may fetch a modal price of about Rs. 4,000 a quintal during the harvest season against the present price which is fluctuating upwards of Rs. 11,000 a quintal.

C.P. Gracy, who headed a three-member price research team that included Jyoti Naik and Nagashree N., told *The Hindu* that the normal price of ginger was around Rs. 2,000 a quintal before the price fluctuation.

“The present price level is only temporary and mainly due to the high demand triggered by shortfall in production,” she said while indicating that it may not be appropriate to consider the present range of price for any comparison with future price.

60 p.c. fall

Wayanad and surrounding areas in Kerala, which account for the highest ginger production in the country, reported nearly 60 per cent fall in production in 2012-13, the survey notes.

In Karnataka, ginger is grown in about 29,000 hectares, spread over mainly in Hassan, Kodagu, Shimoga, Chickmagalur, Bidar and Mysore districts. It is cultivated both as the main crop as well as an intercrop in plantations.

India is the largest producer of ginger in the world, with an estimated production of 7,56,000 tonnes in 2012-13 against the global production of about 1.6 million tonnes. About 1,55,000 hectares of land is under ginger cultivation in India with an average productivity of 1,514 kg per hectare.

India accounts for about 21 per cent of the global share of ginger production, followed by China (20.5 per cent), Indonesia (12.7 per cent), Nepal (11.5 per cent) and Thailand (10 per cent). India is also the largest exporter of ginger. India exported about 35,616.4 tonnes of ginger to the United States, the UAE, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Germany, Morocco, the United Kingdom, Nepal, Spain, Egypt and other countries during 2011-12.

In India, ginger is cultivated mainly in Kerala, Odisha, Karnataka, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Sikkim

Direct seeding of rice brings in more benefits, cuts costs

Two farmers in Kunduwada village on the outskirts of the city have begun growing paddy by adopting the direct seeding. They feel that this technique is highly beneficial compared to transplanting rice, which is more popular in most rice-growing States.

Mallappa, Thippanna, and his son N.T. Nagaraj, who successfully cultivated paddy by direct seeding, shared their experiences with presspersons.

According to the farmers, the laborious process of setting up a nursery, growing paddy seedlings and transplanting them could be easily avoided. Farmers would need 30 kg of rice seedlings for one acre while cultivating through transplantation; in direct seeding, only 10 kg for an acre was needed.

In addition, 10 labourers are needed for each acre while transplanting seedlings. On the other hand, a tractor and four litres of diesel is all one needs in direct seeding, they said.

Mr. Nagaraj said direct seeding did not even need much fertilizer; only two quintals compared to the five quintals consumed during the traditional process involving transplantation. Direct seeding is also faster than its traditional counterpart, he added.

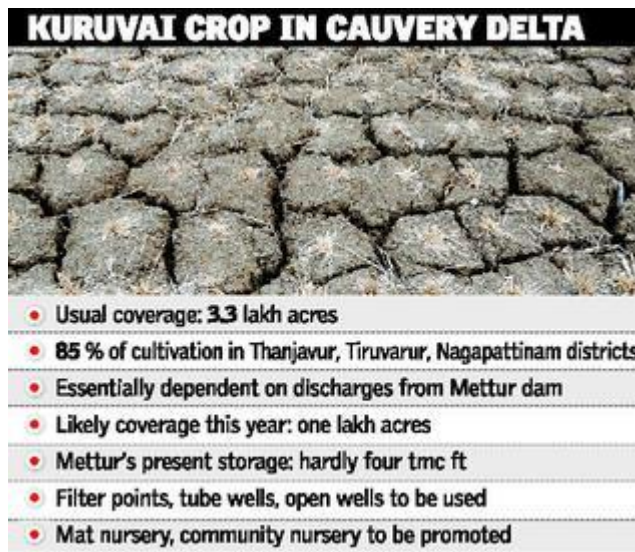
The farmers said that they would continue to use this technique, on account of its benefits and lower cost, and added that they would educate other farmers in this method of cultivation.

S.G. Patil, professor, Environmental Sciences, University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad, and R.G. Gollar, Joint Director of Agriculture, visited the fields on Wednesday.

Addressing presspersons, they said direct seeding was highly cost-effective and did not need much fertilizer. Prof. Patil said the department would popularise this technique.

Poor storage portends bleak kuruvai prospects

Only 1 lakh acres this year can be covered against 3.3 lakh acres in a normal year



Irrigation managers and agriculture officials are debating the exact extent on which farmers can take up cultivation of the short-term kuruvai crop this year under adverse conditions.

Going by data for the last 10 years and observations of officials of the Agriculture and Public Works Departments, it appears that one lakh acres can be covered this year. In a normal year, 3.3 lakh acres are covered.

The present situation is extremely adverse as the Mettur dam, the lifeline of the delta, has a storage of hardly four thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) against the capacity of 93.47 tmc ft.

On the same day last year, the storage was about 41 tmc ft. Besides, the groundwater table in the Thanjavur, Nagapattinam and Tiruvarur districts, three of which accounts for 85 per cent of the Kuruvai cultivation in the delta, does not present a bright scenario.

In Karnataka too, the situation is very bleak. Four reservoirs in that State across the Cauvery have a combined storage of around 13 tmc ft against their capacity of 114 tmc ft.

The kuruvai crop is essentially dependent upon discharge of water from Mettur which, in turn, relies on release from Karnataka. The normal pattern is to commence nursery in May-June and complete harvest the latest by early October. The idea is to make use of the Cauvery river water for the cultivation as the period coincides with the southwest monsoon, during which the catchment areas in Karnataka and Kerala usually experience heavy rainfall.

If Karnataka does not release Tamil Nadu's share of water, as prescribed by the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal, the crop will be in for trouble.

This was what witnessed in at least four years since 2002. During 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005, the shortfall in realisation of the water [as per the Tribunal's interim order] during southwest monsoon (June-September) varied from about 97 tmc ft to 107 tmc ft to 35 tmc ft. In 2012-2013, even going by a distress-sharing formula, Tamil Nadu should have received, during the corresponding period, 54.5 tmc ft more than what it realised – around 28 tmc ft. In all these four years, the coverage in Thanjavur, Nagapattinam and Tiruvarur was over one lakh acres. Last year, due to a combination of steps including 12-hour power supply in the region, the coverage was 1.3 lakh acres. This is why the authorities are hopeful of achieving one lakh acres even this year too. As of now, around 6,920 acres have been covered in Thanjavur and Nagapattinam.

This time, the coverage of the crop is expected to be accomplished by using filter points, tube wells and open wells.

Indicating the Agriculture department's plans for the present year, an official explains that different strategies such as mat nursery and community nursery will be adopted. The System of Rice Intensification (SRI), a cultivation method requiring less nursery area, water and labour apart from fewer seeds, is being encouraged in a big way. Seeds of short-term paddy varieties are being distributed through agricultural extension centres and private dealers. The State has a sufficient stock of certified seeds, fertilizers and pesticides.

Last week, Chief Minister Jayalalithaa chaired a meeting to take stock of the situation. Asked about the outcome, the official replies that there will soon be an announcement.

Special camps on drip irrigation

Special camps will be conducted in Perambalur district on June 1 to educate farmers on the benefits of drip irrigation.

According to a release from District Collector Darez Ahamed, under the National Micro Irrigation Project, the Centre had ordered 100 per cent subsidy for small and minor farmers (holding up to five acres) and 75 per cent subsidy for other farmers to promote drip irrigation.

Camps in this connection were held at the Alathur and Kunnam taluk offices on May 25.

On June 1, similar camps would be conducted at the Veppanthattai and Perambalur taluk offices.

Arrangements had been made for issuing computerised chitta, adangal, land map and small and marginal farmer certificate at the camp. Hence, those interested in setting up drip irrigation facility could participate in the camp with a copy of the ration card and three passport size photographs.

Hike in import price leads to spurt in arecanut prices

Price of locally grown varieties has gone up to around Rs. 180 a kg



The prices of arecanut started increasing at the Shimoga Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee immediately after the Union government's announcement. —File Photo: R. Eswarraj

The increase in the minimum import price of arecanut has pushed up its prices in the market in the last two weeks. The price of locally grown 'rashi idi' and 'bette' varieties, which was around Rs. 130 a kg earlier, has gone up to around Rs. 180 after the Union government enhanced the minimum import price from Rs. 75 to Rs. 110 a kg on May 13.

The prices started increasing at the Shimoga Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee immediately after the announcement. It reached Rs. 190 a kg on May 21. It stabilised later, and 1 kg of arecanut is being traded at Rs. 180 for the past five days.

D.M. Shankarappa, president of the Shimoga Arecanut Merchants' Association, told *The Hindu* that the government's decision had created a positive mood in the market.

Change in strategy

Another factor responsible for the increase in arecanut prices is the reported change in the business strategy of gutka firms.

The manufacture and sale of gutka have been banned in 23 States and five Union Territories. Following complaints that gutka was being illegally sold in these places, the Supreme Court sought a compliance report. The court asked other States to enforce the ban too. Following this, it is learnt that many gutka manufacturing units have switched over to the production of pan masala and scented supari.

To attract consumers towards their new products, gutka companies started using good quality arecanut varieties such as 'rashi idi', 'aapi', and 'bette' that are grown in Malnad and the coastal regions. This has led to a rise in demand.

The price of local varieties had come down after gutka companies started mixing the low quality arecanut, imported at a cheap price, in their products.

Mr. Shankarappa expressed the hope that the present price would prevail for at least three months. "There is an imbalance between demand and supply as a majority of farmers have sold their produce. Fresh stock will enter the market in September. Till then, the prices are likely to remain high," he added.

Showers raise hopes among Dharwad farmers

Agriculture Department says sowing likely to begin this weekend



eager wait:A farmer looks at the sky hoping for more rain in Hubli on Wednesday.— Photo: kiran bakale

Rain in the last couple of days has raised farmers' hopes in the district.

As there were already a few spells of rain, farmers were waiting for more rain to start sowing. While the district should have received 105 mm of rainfall by May-end, it received only 95mm by May 27.

Officials in the Agriculture Department said sowing was likely to begin this weekend if there was more rain. All steps have been taken to help farmers. Seeds and fertilizers were ready for distribution, they added.

The officials said the department would encourage farmers to take up organic farming. Fertility of soil was getting affected year after year owing to excess use of fertilizers. Hence, farmers would be asked to opt for organic farming, they said.

The department has fixed a target of taking up sowing in 2.8 lakh hectares in the district. Of this, paddy would be grown on 27,600 ha, maize on 42,900 ha, green gram on 25,075 ha, groundnut on 29,100 ha, soya bean on 34,530 ha, and cotton on 38,000 ha, the officials said. Last year, sowing was taken up on 1.28 lakh ha against the expected 2.8 lakh ha because of inadequate rainfall.

The department has kept seeds and fertilizers ready for groundnut, green gram, maize, soya bean and cotton crops. Distribution of seeds and fertilizers would begin in 14 hoblis. Besides, the department has opened 14 additional distribution centres with two officials for each centre. The officials said the district required 63,400 tonnes of fertilizer during the kharif season. So far, against the total demand of 21,000 tonnes of urea, the department procured 8,995 tonnes. While there was a demand for 22,600 tonnes of DAP, the department had only 14,481 tonnes. Also, against the demand of 5,300 tonnes of potash, the department procured 3,545 tonnes, and against the demand for 14,500 tonnes of complex fertilizer, the department procured only 10,055 tonnes. Farmers have been asked to verify the price of fertilizers with the department before purchasing them from private shops. The department would also distribute seeds at subsidised prices. This could be bought by producing a permit coupon and valid identity card. Farmers have been asked to collect the receipt on purchase of seeds.

The department also released the list of seeds available under the subsidy scheme. Groundnut would be available at Rs. 12 a kg, green gram at Rs. 20, jowar at Rs. 25, soya bean at Rs. 12, maize at Rs. 35 and sunflower at Rs. 80 a kg, the officials said.

Health care programme for women in farm sector launched



First of its kind: A medical examination being conducted as part of the health care programme, 'Ayushmathi'.— Photo: By special arrangement

A programme for health care of women in agriculture has been launched by the Centre for Gender Studies in Agriculture and Farm Entrepreneurship Development (CGSAFED) of Kerala Agricultural University and the Ayurveda Medical Association of India (AMAI).

KAU Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran inaugurated the programme, named Ayushmathi, at a function held at the College of Horticulture here on Wednesday.

The Vice-Chancellor said the programme was the first of its kind in the State.

P.S. Geethakutty, Head, CGSAFED, and D. Sheela, Chairperson of the Kerala chapter of AMAI, described the initiative as a programme for women, by women and of women.

"Problems of malnutrition and irregular food habits will be addressed. Each worker will be administered individual protocols on the basis of extensive tests. We have conducted classes on issues such as fertility and menstrual problems," said Sheela Karalam, who was in charge of the medical examination.

Those who attended the function included Pathummal Beevi, Associate Director of Research; C. T. Abraham, Associate Dean, College of Horticulture; Mary Regina, member, KAU General Council; K.M. Abdul Rehman, District President, AMAI, and V. Indira, Head of the Department of Home Science.

Innovative implements

A six-in-one tool for coconut dehusking and grating, extracting juice from citrus fruits and cutting large vegetables was among the devices developed by farmers that were demonstrated at a workshop for identification and mapping of farmer innovations organised by Thrissur Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) on Tuesday.

A tool to punch a hole in a tender coconut, a handy implement to collect nutmeg from orchards, and a simple micro irrigation mechanism were displayed.

Some interesting crop varieties were also presented by farmers. Among them were pepper varieties that could be harvested throughout the year.

A kind of mango that gives big fruits throughout the year and common melon with multiple specialties were exhibited.

“We will refer these varieties to experts in plant breeding. We are also planning a survey to collect details about innovations that might have failed to reach the workshop. The feedback is encouraging,” said Ranjan S. Karippai, Head of KVK.

Inaugurating the workshop, Kerala Agricultural University’s Director of Extension P.V.

Balachandran said the recommendations of the workshop would be evaluated at a State-level forum. About 100 farmers attended the workshop.

Bijapur farmers waiting for some good showers



Farmers in Bijapur district have begun preparing land for sowing.— Photo: Rajendra Singh Hajeri

After suffering through drought and poor rainfall that destroyed crops in the last two years, farmers of the district are hoping for a good monsoon.

Many, praying for early showers, have started preparing their land for sowing.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture is procuring and storing adequate quantity of seeds and fertilizer for the kharif season.

Sporadic

The district has received sporadic rain in the last few days, but heavy showers are needed to expedite sowing.

According to officials of the meteorological department, from January to May-end, the district should have received 72.2 mm rain, but has only got 44 mm so far.

“Unless we get good rain in the coming days, sowing will not pick up. Heavy rain ensures retention of moisture in the soil,” said Siddappa Puranikmath, a farmer.

Target

The Agriculture Department has set a target of 4.3 lakh hectares for sowing for the kharif season.

Seeds will be distributed through 18 raitha samparka kendras. The department has so far procured 22,375 quintals of seeds of various crops for distribution.

The district requires 59,500 quintals of fertilizer, of which, the department has so far stored 31,847 quintals, officials said. Further consignments are expected to be delivered soon, sources here said.

Sowing will pick up in the first week of June if the district gets good rain, officials said.

They have begun preparing land for sowing

It's a double whammy for cashew farmers

Cashew is an important commercial crop in Visakhapatnam district, but this year a pest that affected the cashewnut groves at the flowering stage has resulted in only 25 per cent survival in half the 35,000-hectare area. The farmers' hope that they would get a good price since yield is less has not yet materialised. Last year, an 80-kg bag fetched Rs. 7,500 and they expected Rs. 8,000 this year but have been offered only Rs. 5,600. Most of the farmers have decided to wait hoping that the price would go up.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Tree census begins in Coimbatore

A tree census was conducted in the city on Wednesday by Forest College and Research Institute, Mettupalayam, along with some voluntary organisations. On Wednesday, they assessed the tree cover in Ramnagar. A full-fledged study will be conducted from June 5 for all wards within Coimbatore corporation.

The members, consisting of students from the institute and member of various environmental organisations were divided into groups of five and took stock of the trees in the area.

A Balasubramanian, a professor at the institute and co-ordinator of the programme said based on this study the potential spaces for tree planting can be identified so that further corrective steps can be initiated. He also added that the tree's length, width and even the GPS position will be noted using sophisticated equipment like clinometer, haga altimeter and tree range finder.

NI Jalaludin, president of Nature Conservation Society (NCS) said residents were pleased with the initiative. "We thought people would not allow us to enter their homes to assess the trees. However, as people had read about this in the newspapers, they responded very well to our initiatives," he said.

"We are attempting to take a detailed stock of the trees in the region. According to the directions of the United Nations, 33 per cent of the human living area must be tree cover. Trees are the only living organisms which can generate oxygen and contain pollution. The data will help us assess and improve the environment," he said.

Strawberry revolution in Himachal's Manali villages

With demand for local fruits rising in summer tourist season, every second farmer in Manali region of Kullu district is growing strawberries in his backyard and is earning good money by reaching out to customers directly.

Strawberry cultivation is on the rise in Manali for its high prices. Tourists are willing to pay any amount to taste the local fresh fruits and as villagers are selling their produce directly to tourists, it has doubled the sale due to trust factor. A small packet of strawberries, which contains about 15 fruits, is selling for Rs 10, while growers are getting less than Rs 50 for one kilogramme from

the fruit markets.

"Almost all villagers have grown strawberries their farms, which is profitable because of very low maintenance charges and high prices," said Ram Singh, a strawberry grower from Parsha village, who claims to have started this business first in his village. Strawberries ripen in May and June months, which are peak tourist months and farmers have not much work to do in their fields. Taking advantage of the trend, most of the villagers have chosen to go for strawberry business.

The climatic conditions in Manali are appropriate for strawberry cultivation and area under this crop is growing rapidly. Strawberry is replacing traditional crops like cabbage, tomatoes, garlic, coriander and radish from backyard farms. Whenever you visit villages in Manali, strawberry farms are commonly seen next to the houses.

Reen Devi from Chhiyal village, said commonly each woman sells strawberries worth over Rs 1,000 every day. "We work in a group and sell the fruit at the green tax barrier, where all tourist vehicles stop. We come in our traditional dresses, which helps us in convincing our customers to buy our fresh fruits," she added.

Given the demands from tourists, strawberries are also being sold in one and two kilogramme gift packs, which are easy to carry.

These berries are mostly organic and their bright colour is attracting attention of the tourist

hindustantimes

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Thursday, May 30

Max Min

35° | 27°

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 70 Sunset: 06:31

Wind: normal Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Friday, May 31

Max Min

35° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Jun 1



36° | 29°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday

Jun 2



35° | 29°

Overcast

Monday

Jun 3



37° | 30°

Overcast

Tuesday

Jun 4



35° | 29°

Overcast

Wednesday

Jun 5



35° | 29°

Overcast

Airport Weather

Chennai

Rain: 0 Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 70 Sunset: 06:31

Wind: normal Barometer: 1005

Two-day workshop on organic farming

While urban consumers think farmers are not doing enough to go organic, they are unaware of where their food comes from, and how it is grown.

To bridge this gap, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) DigitalGreen and Fresh & Local have organised a workshop 'Farmer Funda' at Studio X, Fort, on Saturday and Sunday, where citizens can learn about the organic movement by farmers.

Videos of farmers using various methods to accelerate organic farming practices, such as producing inexpensive fertilizers and pesticides from natural substances, will be shown, followed by sessions on cooking with organic vegetables and fruits.

Farmers from Madhya Pradesh, in association with NGO Samaj Pragati, will give organic farming tips to attendees.

On Sunday, participants will get hands-on experience in urban farming on the terrace of a building in Mohammed Ali Road, where Fresh & Local has created an urban garden with the help of the building's residents.

"We are excited about how the organic movement is growing in Mumbai," said Adrienne Thadani, founder of Fresh & Local. "So we thought it would be a good idea for farmers to show the innovative green technology they use to Mumbaiites. We hope to send out a message that if farmers can do organic farming on a large scale, they can too," Thadani said.

Policy uncertainty hurting solar sector growth: Mercom

The Indian solar sector's growth continues at a slow pace amidst policy uncertainty and experimentation. Policy ambiguity is rife, with rules being changed every other month, according to Mercom Capital Group, a clean energy consultancy.

Of the 1,761 MW installed base in the country, about 557 MW has so far been installed in 2013 while several projects have been delayed.

Emerging market

Considering India is an emerging solar market where the growth rate is expected to be much higher than other parts of the world, installations in 2013 will likely end up disappointing the markets, the Mercom update has noted. The current solar policy environment looks more like an experiment than a serious policy that will help create demand and solve the current power crisis in India, it states. The split and domestic content requirements are examples of this. Domestic content requirement policies, such as those that contributed to the delays, continue to be pursued. There is disconnect between the policies pursued and the original goal of procuring solar energy at the most cost-effective price. In fact, many policy changes have been contradictory.

The reverse bidding process was chosen so solar gear can be procured at the lowest possible bids but now all efforts are being made to ensure that developers can't access the lowest priced equipment.

Viability Gap Funding

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) recently proposed a draft Phase II policy and has opened it up for comments. Instead of bidding for the lowest tariff, developers will now be bidding for the Viability Gap Funding (VGF) requirement.

Whether this will help accelerate the sector's growth is yet to be seen. Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, among others, are seeking to promote the solar sector with their own initiatives. Gujarat leads the pack with an installed base of 857 MW.

Polaris exudes optimism as Govt clears quadricycles

With the Government recently giving the green signal to quadricycles as a vehicle category, off-road vehicles manufacturer Polaris wants its products to come under this category as well. Such a move would help in mass selling such products in India.

Polaris India, domestic arm of the US-based company, sells around 20 different products in various categories of off-road vehicles, including all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) and snowmobiles. These vehicles can be driven only off-road, as they cannot get registrations and, if seen on roads, can be confiscated by the police. They can be driven only in enclosed areas such as farmhouses or tracks owned by individuals.

Exhaustive rules

"The Government has approved quadricycles as a category. In Europe, the rules are exhaustive and contain one section for 'recreational vehicles', under which all our vehicles fall. I would be happy if they include our products in the rules, as in Europe," Pankaj Dubey, Managing Director, Polaris India, told *Business Line*.

In Europe, the ATVs get registered under that section, which should apply in India as well, he said, adding that it will help overcome customer reluctance to buy the products. "We are approaching the Government in different forums to support us. Since the rules are being made now and there is a similar rule in Europe, we hope the complete quadricycles rules are implemented in India," Dubey said.

Once the rules are clear, the company would complete all the formalities such as mandatory fuel emission norms, he added.

Target buyers

Security agencies and para-military forces in the country are reportedly interested in buying such vehicles to fight naxalites. The forest department is also interested, he said, adding that the agencies have already seen and tested the vehicles, and are waiting for internal approvals for purchase.

Apart from tourists and special tracks enthusiasts who purchase the vehicles for recreational use, individual buyers such as Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, UB Group Chairman Vijay Mallya and industrialist Ness Wadia have also bought vehicles from Polaris.

The company has 14 dealers in Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata and Dehradun, and will be opening one in Guwahati this year.

There are 16 tracks, most of them in South India, including two in Bangalore and one each in Chennai and Coimbatore, Dubey said.

The prices of the different models range between Rs 2.50 lakh and Rs 25 lakh, and all are imported as completely built units.

BGR Energy Q4 net down 20%

BGR Energy Systems registered a 20 per cent dip in fourth quarter net profit (standalone) at Rs 53.85 crore, from Rs 67.17 crore the previous corresponding quarter. Net sales were down 6.5 per cent at Rs 1,063 crore (Rs 1,137 crore).

Construction and EPC contracts contributed Rs 984.54 crore, accounting for over 92 per cent of the revenue, said a company release.

For fiscal 2012-13, BGR Energy's net profit dropped 27 per cent to Rs 163.67 crore (Rs 223.52 crore). Net sales decreased 10 per cent to Rs 3,105 crore.

Execution, delivery and balance of plant opportunities will continue to be the focus for this financial year, said the company. BGR carries over an order book exceeding Rs 11,000 crore, it added.

'Security, biggest barrier to greater tech autonomy'

Security is the biggest barrier to greater tech autonomy, or permitting employees to use technologies of their choice, in India.

However, tech autonomy would empower employees, result in revenue growth and make businesses more efficient, according to a survey by Internet security firm Blue Coat Systems.

About 92 per cent of the respondents in India said that tech autonomy would help in improving business. India ranks among the top three or four countries when it comes to tech autonomy, which is termed as applications that employees would like to use, without the explicit consent of the IT department.

In India, cloud storage applications ranked first, with 25 per cent of the respondents stating that these were used without the IT department's consent.

"In many companies, the amount of storage an employee would like to have is much greater than what the IT department would permit. There is a need for a particular storage capability, and IT isn't delivering that, then the employee would get it from a cloud storage service," David Murphy, President and Chief Operating Officer at Blue Coat Systems said.

Social media apps and marketing automation apps ranked second (23 per cent each), while office applications ranked fourth. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software ranked fifth, according to the survey.

"These are the desired applications that employees on the business side want to have," he said, social media apps are important as most of the companies do not have these suites internally

Indian rubber in Chinese tyre

India may not be a top rubber exporting nation but the commodity is finding its way to China for making tyres.

According to Rajiv Budhreja, Director-General of Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association, Indian rubber is being exported to Malaysia where it is processed for export to China.

In turn, the Chinese use it for making tyres that make their way into India.

In fact, Chinese tyre import is a source of worry for Indian tyre manufacturers.

India exported 15,600 tonnes of rubber during April-January last fiscal against 21,000 tonnes the previous fiscal, Rubber Board data showed.

“Almost all this has gone to Malaysia,” Budhraj said

Coonoor tea auction volume hits 5-week low

A volume of 13.46 lakh kg would be offered for Sale No: 22 of Coonoor Tea Trade Association auction to take place on Thursday and Friday, reveals our analysis of the brokers' listings.

It is the lowest offer in five weeks. It is some 35,000 kg less than last week's offer but as much as 2.77 lakh kg more than the offer this time last year.

Of the 13.46 lakh kg on offer, 9.74 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 3.72 lakh kg to the dust grades.

As much as 12.69 lakh kg belongs to CTC and only 0.77 lakh kg, orthodox variety.

The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades.

In the leaf counter, only 0.50 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 9.24 lakh kg, CTC.

Among the dusts, only 0.27 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 3.45 lakh kg, CTC.

Of the 13.46 lakh kg coming up for sale, fresh tea accounts for 12.36 lakh kg. About 1.10 lakh kg comprises teas which had remained unsold in previous auctions.

Homedale Estate tea, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped CTC leaf market last week when Vora Sons bought it for Rs 167.

Vigneshwar Estate got Rs 160, Crosshill Estate Rs 159, Hittakkal estate and Kannavarai Estate Rs 155 each. In all, 37 marks got Rs 125 and more.

Among orthodox teas, Chamraj got Rs 250, Highfield Estate Rs 186, Havukal Rs 178, Corsley and Kairbetta Rs 177 each and Kodanad Rs 176. In all, 34 marks got Rs 125 and more.

“Better liquoring and medium CTC leaf teas struggled to retain previous week’s levels while plainers gained Rs 2-4.

Whole leaf orthodox were dearer by Rs 2-3 while others, irregular. Primary orthodox dusts eased up to Rs 10.

High-priced CTC dusts lost Rs 2-4 but plainers gained Rs 1-2”, an auctioneer told *Business Line*.

Spot rubber prices weaken

The domestic rubber prices weakened further on Wednesday. In spot, the market failed to sustain at Tuesday’s closing levels on buyer resistance following the declines on NMCE.

According to observers, there was no selling pressure in the market possibly owing to supply fears but the absence of genuine buyers continued to keep the commodity under pressure. The trend was partially mixed.

Sheet rubber slipped Rs 169.50 (Rs 170.00) a kg according to traders. The grade finished unchanged at Rs 169.50 at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board.

In futures, the June contracts declined to Rs 166.00 (Rs 168.05), July to Rs 164.51 (Rs 167.17), August to Rs 163.25 (Rs 165.74) and September to Rs 162.73 (Rs 163.00) while the October futures improved to Rs 163.50 (Rs 162.76) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

The June futures closed at ¥251.7 (Rs 139.66) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates in Rs/ kg were: RSS-4: 169.50 (170.00); RSS-5: 165.00 (165.00); Ungraded: 157.00 (158.00); ISNR 20: 158.50 (159.50) and Latex 60%: 108.00 (108.50).

Onset of monsoon in Kerala in the next 4 days, says Met

Conditions are becoming favourable for the onset of South-West monsoon over Kerala over the next three to four days, the Met Department said on Wednesday.

GAME-CHANGER

South Arabian Sea, Maldives and the Comorin region, the last three pit-stops on the home stretch, would be covered in that order over the next two days. The 'low'-turned-depression in the North Bay of Bengal is proving the game-changer, according to seasoned monsoon watchers.

The rains are expected to gather strength after onset, since a Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) wave is set to arrive into South Arabian Sea.

The MJO wave travels from west to east high up in the atmosphere, but has significance influence on ground weather. Suitably timed pass-over has also underwritten onset of South-West monsoon in the past.

The pass-over this year follow the onset just by a day or two, say forecasts.

RAIN WAVE

Meanwhile, a US storm tracker agency said that the MJO activity from around June 5 might also set off a rain wave to break away and head towards Oman coast.

It would leave behind a smaller mass of rain, which is shown as slithering up the Konkan coast and land up over south-west Gujarat.

Tuesday's low-pressure area intensified into a depression and was looking to force its way into Bangladesh coast on Wednesday, second such to do so after cyclone 'Mahasen.'

Regional Specialised Meteorological Centre, New Delhi, expected the depression to cross the coast in the evening.

But US Joint Typhoon Warning Centre suspected that the storm could stay put over Head Bay of Bengal (off Kolkata) for the night and wriggle into Bangladesh coast the next morning.

If this were to prove true, high winds and pouring rain could bear down on Kolkata, parts of East India and North-East India, Bangladesh and Myanmar.

Outlook bearish for pulses

Weak demand and rise in selling pressure continued to drag prices of pulses and pulse seeds in Indore mandis.

Moong witnessed downtrend for the second consecutive week with its prices further declining by Rs 200 a quintal in the past one week amid poor buying support and rise in arrivals.

Moong (best) on Wednesday ruled at Rs 4,800-4,900 a quintal, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs 4,300-4,500.

Amid decline in buying support and rise in arrivals of new summer crop, moong prices in Indore mandis in the past fortnight have declined by almost Rs 600.

According to traders, bearish sentiment in moong will continue in the coming days unless and until demand in pulses goes up.

Moong dal also declined by Rs 100 a quintal on weak buying support and demand in spot moong. Moong dal (medium) ruled at Rs 6,300-6,400, moong dal (bold) at Rs 7,000-7,100, while moong mongar declined to Rs 7,200-7,300.

Tur also witnessed downtrend on weak demand with tur (Maharashtra) prices at Rs 4,500, while tur (Madhya Pradesh) ruled at Rs 3,900-4,100.

Notwithstanding lower domestic crop output, tur prices have been ruling sluggish for quiet sometime on poor demand and buying support in pulses.

Future of tur appears to be bearish with decline in domestic production and higher import. Decline in tur has dragged Tur (full) by Rs 100 to Rs 6,200-6,300, while tur tur dal (sawa no.) at Rs 5,800-5,900 while tur marka ruled at Rs 7,000.

Urad and its dal ruled stable on slack demand with urad (bold) being quoted at Rs 3,500 while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 2,900-3,000 a quintal.

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Bullish futures support edible oils

Prices of soft oils increased on Wednesday tracking firm futures markets and weak currency.

In Mumbai, palmolein and soyabean refined oil rose by Rs 3 and Rs 2 each. Cotton refined oil gained by Rs 2 for 10 kg. Sunflower refined oil inched up by Rs 3 and rapeseed oil ruled unchanged. Groundnut oil slipped by Rs 10 in line with drop in Saurashtra where it declined further by Rs 20 on higher selling.

Shailesh Kataria of Riddhi Broker told *Business Line* that “due to month end, ready demand remained slack as stockists concentrated on fulfilling old commitments but they were optimistic about higher demand with start of new month next week. Bullish futures market and weak Indian currency are supporting the physical market sentiments.”

In Mumbai, 150-200 tonnes palmolein were traded in resale at Rs 508-509. Ruchi sold about 350-400 tonnes soyabean refined oil at Rs 668 and then raised price by Rs 2 for June and Rs 4 for July, sources said.

Soyabean arrivals were 90,000 bags including 40,000 in Madhya Pradesh and its prices were Rs 3,840-3,850 ex-mandi and Rs 3,940-3,950 for plant delivery.

Mustard seed arrivals were 2.40 lakh bags and the prices were Rs 3,030-3,560.

At the close, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 517-520; super palmolein Rs 555 and sunflower refined oil Rs 780. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 523 ex-Patalganga and Rs 515 ex-JNPT, soyabean refined oil at Rs 670-672 for June and July; sunflower refined oil at Rs 765.

In Gujarat, palmolein ex-Kandla was quoted at Rs 505-510.

In Saurashtra – Rajkot, groundnut oil declined by Rs 20 to Rs 1,550 (Rs 1,570) for *telia* tin and Rs 1,000 (Rs 1,020) for loose 10 kg.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil June future was Rs 714.30 (Rs 711.45); July at Rs 695.40 (Rs 692.40) and August at Rs 690 (Rs 687.30).

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil June contract was MYR 2,359 (MYR 2,372); July at MYR 2,398 (MYR 2,393) and August MYR 2,399 (MYR 2,388) a tonne.

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): Groundnut oil 1,025 (1,035); soya refined oil 667 (665); sunflower exp. ref. 675 (675); sunflower ref. 765 (762); rapeseed ref. oil

695 (695); rapeseed expeller ref. 665 (665); cottonseed ref. oil 645 (643) and palmolein 511 (508).

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

Stockists hope sugar demand will pick up next week

Spot sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market extended their losses by Rs 10-15 a quintal for selected varieties on Wednesday.

Slack month-end retail demand and ample supply from producers put pressure on the market but stockists are optimistic about some improvement in demand at start of the new month next week.

Naka and Mill tender rates were down by Rs 10 on higher selling pressure at the upper level. Sugar futures were range-bound in absence of any positive sign.

Sources said that millers are not willing to sell at lower price as it is already ruling below the cost of production but pressure of higher production and sufficient stocks forced them to sell at market price as needed. On the other side, due to month-end local retail demand is low keeping the overall volume thin.

An analyst said: "Expectation of timely arrival of monsoon keeps buyers away from bulk commitments. Usually demand for sugar during monsoon slows down. Higher production of about 240-245 lakh tonnes and a carryover stock of 90 – 95 lakh tonnes at the end of the current year will continue to put pressure on the market.

In the Vashi market, about 61-62 truckloads (each 100 bags) arrived on Wednesday, while dispatches were around 54-55 loads. \

On Tuesday, about 16-17 mills sold 38,000– 40,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,930-3,000 (Rs.2,930-Rs3,010) for S-grade and Rs 3,020-Rs3,100 (Rs 3,030- 3,100) for M-grade.

On National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, June contracts ruled at Rs 3,017 (Rs 3,010), July at Rs 3,058 (Rs 3,056) and August at Rs 3,109 (Rs 3,112) till noon.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were (Rs/quintal): S-grade Rs 3,080–Rs 3,142 (Rs 3,082– Rs 3,160) and M-grade Rs 3,200 - 3,351 (Rs 3,152- 3,371).

***Naka* delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,030 -3,080 (Rs 3,040-3,080) and M-grade Rs 3,100-3,180 (Rs 3,100-3,190).

Business Standard

Less wheat obtained this year won't impact public distribution'

The food ministry estimates wheat procurement in the crop marketing season beginning April 2013 to be 28-30 million tonnes (mt), 8-10 million tonnes less than last year's procurement, owing to brisk purchases by private traders.

Just 24.99 mt of wheat has been procured from farmers, with the procurement season in major states such as Punjab, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh nearly over. During the corresponding period last year, central agencies had procured 33.55 mt.

"We are hopeful we will manage to procure 28-30 mt of wheat from farmers, which is less than last year. This means our efforts to encourage private traders by not accepting their demand to lower the price of wheat sold through the open market scheme has borne fruit," Food Minister K V Thomas told reporters.

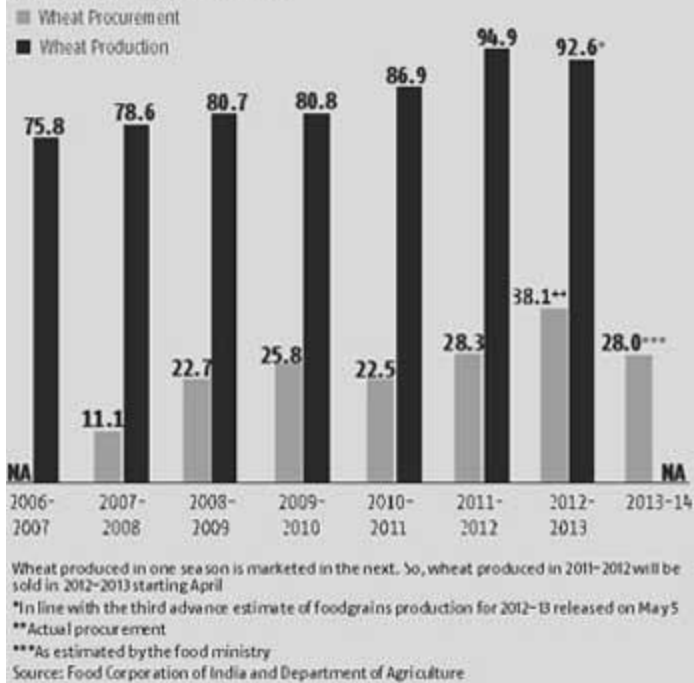
He added the lower wheat procurement wouldn't have any impact on the Public Distribution System or any other government programme, including the Food Security Bill, as the Centre had ample stocks in its warehouses. "Usually, in a year, FCI (Food Corporation of India) procures about 60 mt of foodgrains on an average. After the food Bill is implemented, this would rise to 62 mt. Therefore, the incremental rise is only about two mt. This can be easily managed, even if procurement falls in a season," Thomas said.

As on May 1, the government's foodgrain stocks stood at 77.55 mt, against a requirement of 21.2 mt. Stocks of wheat are estimated at 37.24 mt, against a requirement of seven mt, while those of rice are estimated at 34.72 mt, against a requirement of 14.2 mt.

On lowering the minimum export price of wheat from \$300 a tonne, Thomas said a group of ministers would decide on the issue at its next meeting. "We are not in a hurry to export. Private trade should not survive on our subsidy," he said.

THE LOWDOWN

India's annual wheat procurement by FCI and state agencies and production in million tonnes



Yesterday, wheat arrivals across the country touched 28.54 mt, while procurement by government agencies stood at 24.96 mt. Though the government claims wheat procurement by state agencies has fallen because of heavy buying by private traders, some experts feel lower-than-estimated production in 2012-13, as well as stock holding by farmers have contributed to the decline. Leading traders, experts and economists say India's wheat production in the 2012-13 crop marketing year isn't expected to be anywhere close to the third

advanced estimate of 93.62 mt. In all probability, it would be about 90 mt, as a sudden rise in temperatures in Punjab and Haryana in March and unseasonal rains in Madhya Pradesh in February had reduced the output. Multinational wheat trading companies operating in India have already revised their production numbers for 2012-13 to 86-87 mt, seven to eight mt lower than the previous official estimate.