

Biggest fish seed farm gearing up to be operational soon

It will add 60 new nursery ponds and packing shed with NABARD's assistance



A Mrigal at the Manimuthar fish farm.— Photo: Special Arrangement

The biggest ever fish seed farm near Manimuthar dam in Tirunelveli district is getting ready and is expected to become operational within a couple of months. .

According to Fisheries Department sources, at present, the farm has 75 nursery ponds, eight rearing ponds and one breeder pond, where Katla, Rohu and Mrigal species of fresh water fishes are being raised.

With financial assistance from the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), the farm will add 60 new nursery ponds, each measuring 200 square metre with a packing shed.

A senior State Fisheries Department official said that the NABARD allocated Rs. 12.70 crore under Rural Infrastructure Development Fund to build the additional nursery ponds and packing shed.

Talking about the objective of creating the farm, the officials said it was mainly created to develop inland fisheries in the State by increasing the production of fast growing fish seeds thereby making available protein rich food for the people.

The breeding season for the three species of fresh water fishes are between June and September. The fishes are raised in the farm in controlled environs, using induced spawning techniques. The brood fishes are reared in breeder ponds at the rate of 2,000 kg per hectare. The male and female fishes were segregated during January and intensive feeding is provided. When the climate is conducive for breeding, the male and the female fishes are introduced in the spawning tank at the ratio of 2:1. The breeding takes place during the night. The females release the eggs after eight to 12 hours and they are collected during early morning the next day. They are then transferred to the hatching pool, which hatch after 72 hours. The young ones are then transferred to nursery ponds. The seeds are provided planktons for the first five days and then rice bran and groundnut oil cakes. Fully grown fishes are reared at the farm for two years after which they are sold to the public, added the Fisheries authorities.

Agriculture Dept.: sowing likely to pick up

: Sowing for rabi season is likely to pick up with incessant rain lashing the district since Tuesday morning, sources in the Agriculture Department have said.

Rain has helped the three-week-old rabi crop, particularly jowar and Bengal gram which were facing moisture stress, and late-sown kharif crop (particularly groundnut) in rain-fed areas to recover.

According to sources in the Agriculture Department, the district has received 40.1 mm rainfall till October 21, as against the normal rainfall of 104.8 mm for the month.

The sowing target for the district was set at 1.65 lakh hectares (ha) of which 51,284 ha was irrigated land and 1.13 lakh ha rain-fed. So far, sowing has been completed in about 20,122 ha (12.2 per cent). Jowar, maize, Bengal gram, sunflower and cotton are prominent among other crops cultivated during the season.

Target

The target set for cultivation is highest for Bellary taluk (69,000 ha) followed by Sirguppa (30,500 ha), Hadagali (32,675 ha), Hagari Bommanahalli (15,300 ha), Kudligi (9,000 ha), Hospet (7,350) and Sandur (1,175).

Under rabi, sowing of cereals was expected to be taken up in 33,245 ha — of which jowar would be cultivated in 25,345 ha. Pulses are to be cultivated in 69,630 ha, of which coverage of Bengal gram is 64,603 ha, oil seeds in 53,340 ha (comprising sunflower, which is the major crop covering 52,280 ha) and commercial crops in 7,785 ha with cotton covering 6,605 ha.

There is adequate stock of seeds of various crops for rabi and also chemical fertilizer, according to sources in the Agriculture Department.

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- Sowing target for the district was set at 1.65 lakh hectares*
 - So far, sowing has been completed in about 20,122 ha*
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Farmers to lay siege to Suvarna Vidhana Soudha on Nov. 25

Several organisations have planned to lay siege to the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha at Belgaum during the winter session of the legislature, with the aim of putting pressure on the State government to take steps to expedite the Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project.

Addressing presspersons here on Tuesday, the president of the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha, Kodihalli Chandrashekhar, said nearly one lakh farmers and other people would lay siege to the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha on November 25, the first day of the legislature session. Mr. Chandrashekhar said the Kalasa-Banduri Nala Project issue had been utilised by various parties to gain political mileage. However, they had forgotten about getting it properly implemented once they came to power. He said that on the eve of the legislature session, a protest rally would be taken out in Belgaum from Kittur Rani Chennamma statue.

Mr. Chandrashekhar alleged that the State government was not at all prepared to present a strong argument before the Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal and was only trying to get an adjournment.

To a query, he said it was not a preparatory agitation keeping in mind the Lok Sabha elections and nobody involved in the agitation would contest the elections. Referring to the lack of participation by MLAs and MPs of the region, except for one MLA, at a meeting convened by the Kalasa-Banduri Nala Horata Samiti on Monday, Mr. Chandrashekhar said that it showed their “apathy” towards people’s problems.

Farmers seek compensation

Farmers of the Harihar and Harpanahalli taluks have urged the government to provide compensation for their lands acquired for the purpose of laying a railway line between Harihar and Kotturu and said they would not allow any works to be carried out until they were paid.

The farmers staged a dharna and raised slogans to highlight their demands.

Guddappa, a farmer, said the government had failed to distribute compensation to the farmers whose lands were acquired 12 years ago.

The farmers need the money to buy agricultural lands and the government should pay ‘fair’ compensation as per the prevailing market price of land, he said.

Sunil Kumar, Circle Inspector of Police (Rural) arrived at the spot and pacified the farmers asking them not to hinder the construction works.

He appealed to the farmers to report their grievances to the district administration. However, the farmers warned of intensifying their protest if their demands were not met.

Compensation for Neelam-hit farmers

Guntur district Collector S. Suresh Kumar on Tuesday announced that Rs.17.08 crore was released by the State government to pay compensation to farmers affected by Neelam cyclone. Out of 42,128 farmers affected, 38,742 farmers had opened bank accounts. Efforts were on to open bank accounts to remaining farmers.

Paddy farmers complain of stunted growth, low yield

Sattupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeraiah interacting with paddy farmers at Gowrigudem in Khammam district on Tuesday.

A section of farmers, those who had sown paddy seed supplied by the Andhra Pradesh State Seeds Development Corporation (APSSDC) during this kharif season in Kallur mandal, complained of stunted growth and low crop yield to a team of officials who visited their fields on Tuesday.

A team of officials, comprising Joint Director of Agriculture V.B. Bhaskar Rao, visited the paddy fields in Kallur and Sattupalli mandals in the wake of a representations made by Sattupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeraiah to the higher officials on the plight of the aggrieved farmers.



Accompanied by the officials, Mr. Venkata Veeraiah made an on-the-spot assessment of the condition of the crops, including those in the flowering stage and harvesting phase. A group of farmers at Lokavaram in the mandal expressed fear of substantial losses in cultivation due to the stunted growth of their paddy crop. They attributed the stunted growth and other disorders associated with their crop to supply of either “spurious” seed or “sub-standard” quality of seed by the companies concerned.

They sought the intervention of the MLA to help them secure compensation for the poor yield of crop.

Mr. Veeraiah asked the officials to enquire into the allegations and ensure adequate compensation to the aggrieved farmers. He told the officials that legal options would be explored to secure justice to the aggrieved farmers if the authorities failed to provide them compensation.

Mr. Bhaskar Rao tried to allay the fears of the aggrieved farmers saying the matter would be examined by agricultural scientists to ascertain the facts.

NE monsoon showers bring cheers to Krishna farmers

This will help paddy fields attain stage of flowering

Farmers engaged in kharif operations in Avanigadda mandal in Krishna district.

Heavy rainfall in Krishna district has upset normal life, while inundating some low-lying areas, but was welcomed by farmers in the district.

About 70 mm of rainfall was recorded in the district and the tail-end areas of the river Krishna irrigation canal system were the beneficiaries.

The only worry for farmers was if winds/gales accompany rain all their standing crops would get inundated.

Nagalayanka mandal received the district's highest rainfall of 84 mm on Tuesday, while an average of 70 to 80 mm of rainfall was recorded in the mandals of Koduru, Avanigadda and Mopidevi.

Less than 5 mm rainfall was recorded in Gampalagudem and Tiruvuru madnals bordering Khammam district, according to the weatherman.



“The water level of the canals across the district is normal and no report of excess flow was reported due to sporadic rainfall for the past 72 hours,” Krishna district Revenue Officer L. Vijaya Chander told *The Hindu*. A total of 925 mm of rainfall was recorded due to the North East monsoon on Tuesday.

The monsoon, however, brought cheers to the farmers as the showers would help the paddy fields attain the flowering stage.

There was also no threat to paddy which was sowed early in majority areas in Krishna district during the kharif.

The forecast for farmers is that moderate to heavy rains are likely in most places in Coastal Andhra Pradesh till October 24.

There were several instances in the past of severe damage to paddy fields due to the heavy rain coupled with winds during the withdrawal of the North East monsoon in December. As much as 4 cm rainfall was recorded in Machilipatnam, while other areas such as Gudivada, Nuzvidu, Nagayalanka, Avanigadda also experienced heavy rainfall since Monday night.

Paddy is being grown in an estimated two lakh hectares in the district in the kharif season, in which sowing operations were largely delayed for two months due to untimely rains.

Minister seeks crop loss report



TIRUPATI, October 23, 2013, Revenue Minister N. Raghuveera Reddy has asked the district officials to expedite estimation of loss in agricultural and horticultural crops in drought-affected mandals. Interacting with the Collector and Joint Collector through videoconference here on Tuesday, he directed them to send the report on input subsidy at the earliest. With the onset of monsoon and forecast of heavy rains, he asked the district machinery to

relocate people of low-lying areas as a rehabilitation measure.

BJP lambasts Sheila for rise in vegetable prices

Delhi BJP president Vijay Goel on Tuesday lambasted the Congress Government in Delhi for mismanaging the prices of essential commodities in the city, especially onions, which he claimed was selling at a year-high now.

“Besides onions, other staple vegetables, including potatoes and tomatoes, are also being sold at unprecedented prices causing a lot of hardship to people,” said Mr. Goel.

In a statement on Tuesday, Mr. Goel noted that with the festival season having begun the government has dampened the mood of festivity because of its inept handling of the price situation. “The vegetable prices, particularly of onions, in Delhi have increased by over 30 per cent just over the last one week.” “As the government has taken no concrete step to curb the price rise, the situation is likely to worsen further in the coming days,” noted Mr. Goel.

Mother Dairy hikes milk prices by Rs. 2 per litre

NEW DELHI, October 23, 2013, Mother Dairy, the largest milk supplier in Delhi-NCR, has increased milk prices by Rs. 2 per litre with effect from today due to rise in input cost.

The price of full cream milk has been raised to Rs. 44 per litre from Rs. 42, while that of toned milk to Rs. 34 per litre from Rs. 32.

Double-toned milk will now be available at Rs. 30 per litre against the existing Rs. 28 per litre and token (loose) milk will cost Rs. 32 a litre from Rs. 30.

In a statement, Mother Dairy said it was “compelled to take a hike in its milk prices for all its variants”.

The company said the rise in input costs has forced it to increase the consumer prices to ensure remunerative prices to farmers and sustained availability of milk. “Cattle feed and fodder contribute the bulk (almost 75 per cent) of the total cost of production of milk.

Significant increase in the cattle feed and fodder, and labour has led to the rise in overall cost of production,” it explained. Mother Dairy noted that close to 80 per cent of the total sale proceeds goes into the procurement of milk. “With this the company ensures sustainability of dairy farming by milk producers. This is probably one of the most efficient means of ensuring inclusive growth.” —PTI

Crisis forces onion import

Alarmed at the sudden surge in onion prices, the Centre on Tuesday decided to immediately import about 250 tonnes of the bulb to ease the situation during the coming festival season. The government has convened a meeting of onion-producing States on Thursday to review the position and assess why market arrivals are lower than expected. Observing that the price

spike was “artificial” and due to “hoarding,” Commerce Minister Anand Sharma urged onion-producing States to act against hoarders.

Cabinet Secretary may call meet on onions today

Concerned at the rising prices of onions, the Cabinet Secretary on Tuesday sought the latest position on the production and arrivals from the Agriculture Ministry and the Department of Consumer Affairs. He may call a meeting of senior officials to review the position on Wednesday, official sources indicated.

The Centre has decided to import about 250 tonnes of the bulb to tackle the crisis.

The import price of onion is ruling between Rs. 24 and Rs. 54 per kg in Iran, China and Pakistan markets as against the average domestic price of Rs. 80 in most retail cosmopolitan markets. This time round the wholesale price is ruling at an average of Rs. 52 mainly on account of higher diesel prices.

Even as the demand for banning export of onion is growing louder, Commerce Minister Anand Sharma said the minimum export price was already as high as \$900 per tonne but could be re-visited if the situation demanded.

The price situation depends on production and market arrivals. Normally kharif (Oct.-Dec.) production and arrivals from Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar meet the needs of consumers till the end of the year.

The kharif production in Maharashtra this year was projected to be 8.74 lakh tonnes, but sources said the arrivals were not commensurate with output.

The total production of onion this year at 166.55 lakh tonnes is lower by 4.89 per cent than last year's. Exports between April and September this year were 7.16 lakh tonnes as against 10.02 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

According to NAFED chief, Sanjeev Chopra, if all goes well, India will import five to 10 containers of onion, each containing 25 tonnes, in the next 10 days.

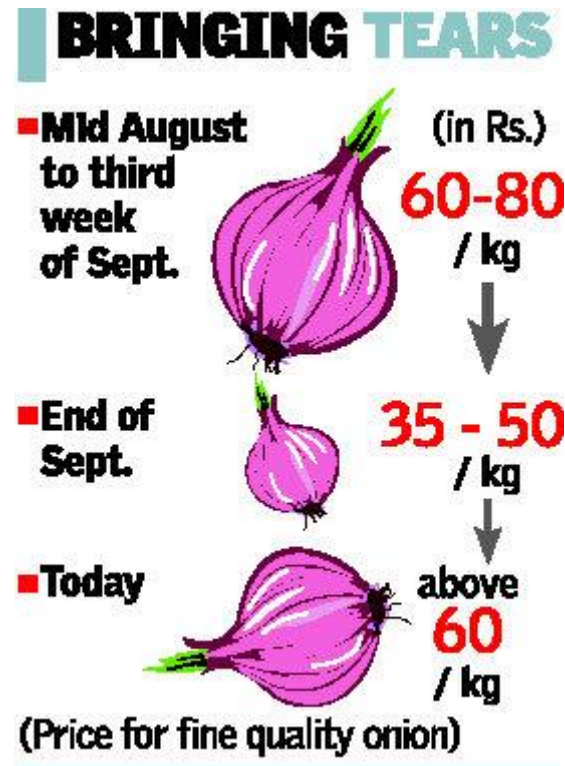
BJP leader Subramanian Swamy, in a statement, attributed the sharp price rise to “the use of black money in the wholesale onion market to hoard vast stocks in the name of forward trading permitted in agriculture.”

Onion makes homemakers teary eyed again

Onion is making homemakers teary eyed yet again. After a brief thaw, the price has spiralled to over Rs. 60 a kg for a good quality produce in the retail market in the city.

On Tuesday, the price in Bangalore ranged between Rs. 30 and over Rs. 60 a kg, depending on quality. While the price for a good quality onion had hovered around Rs. 70 a kg early September, it had come down to less than Rs. 50 towards the end of September.

With onion price in Delhi making headlines after it inched closer to the Rs. 100-mark, traders here are attributing this the nationwide increase in the price due to shortage and also poor quality. Demand from north and eastern States for Karnataka onions has also pulled up the price here, traders say.



In Bangalore, the wholesale price of good quality onion sourced from Chitradurga area is hovering around Rs. 50 a kg at the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) at Yeshwantpur, while the retail price is between Rs. 60 and Rs. 70 a kg. The wholesale price of medium quality onion and small-sized onion called as gulti in market parlance is about Rs. 40 and Rs. 20 a kg respectively. Commission, cess, transport and porters' cost besides the retail margins push up the price by the time it reaches the consumers, traders said. S. Balakrishna, vice-president of Bangalore Potato and Onion Merchants Association, said that the price has moved up here because of high demand from neighbouring States as well as demand for onion from some northern and eastern States which are facing shortage. "Normally the price of onion in October will be

between Rs. 25 and Rs. 30, but this time, the price increased due to crop failure in major onion-growing States." Traders from other States are camping here to buy onions and transport them to their regions, Mr. Balakrishna said and added that a good crop could have brought down the price to less than Rs. 20 a kg. "The price started moving upwards after Dasara since onion from Nasik/ Pune region is of poor quality. This high price is expected to remain till midNovember when quality onions are expected," Karisiddappa of Sri Jenukul Siddeshwara Traders said.

Onion prices go through the roof

Sold just below Rs. 100 a kg, but prices are expected to show a significant dip soon with fresh supply from Rajasthan

Onion prices peaked to a new high on Tuesday, settling just below Rs.100 a kg in the city, but the good news is that the prices might show a significant dip soon. Wholesale traders and the government have assured consumers that the prices of onions will reduce substantially over the next 48 hours as fresh supply from Rajasthan have begun to arrive in the city. Consumers across the city complained of onions being sold at exorbitant rates. "We had to pay as much as Rs. 80 for a kg in our neighbourhood. The quality too was not good," said Sharada Sharma, a resident of Mayur Vihar Phase-I.

This trend is on its way out, claim wholesalers at the Azadpur Mandi here. “Supply from the southern States was disrupted and the crop was damaged due to the recent rains. This led to a sharp increase in the prices. But supplies from Rajasthan have begun to arrive and the prices will show a substantial decrease in the next few days and by Diwali they will reduce further. For the next few months, Delhi will get its supply from Rajasthan, which will ensure that the prices do not escalate. The production and transportation cost of onions from Rajasthan is much lower compared with the far off southern and western States. Therefore, onion prices will only fall in the coming weeks,” said Rajender Sharma, chairperson of the Azadpur Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee.

Mr. Sharma said the prices of onion sold at the Azadpur Mandi were between Rs. 37.5 and Rs. 60 per kg, depending on the size and the quality. “There is a buzz that has been created in the city about onions being sold at Rs. 100 a kg, which is not correct. At the Mandi, we have sold very good quality onions at a premium price of Rs. 60, the average crop did not sell for more than Rs. 40. And what is being sold at Rs. 40 in the wholesale market can only be sold at up to Rs. 60 by the retailers.”

Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit on Tuesday said her government is doing all it can to control the spiralling price rise. “There has been an increase in prices of onion across the country and the Delhi government has always tried to provide the commodity at a reasonable price through various means,” she said. She attributed the hike in prices to unprecedented rains in a number of onion-growing States and said the problem is not limited to Delhi alone, but is spread across the country.

ONION



GOVERNMENT MAY BAN ONION EXPORTS TO CHECK PRICE RISE

The government is mulling banning onion exports to contain prices, which have risen back to the Rs 80-90/kg level in the national capital because of supply shortages. Not only in Delhi, consumers in other parts of the country are affected by rise in onion prices. In major cities, onions are being sold at Rs 60-80 per kg in retail markets. The domestic availability of onion has been affected because of damage to the kharif crop because of unseasonal rains in key producing states including Maharashtra. The sharp rise in onion prices has forced the government to consider suspension of overseas sale of onions.

Watershed programme set to enter next phase

KANNUR, October 23, 2013, The integrated watershed development programme in the Payyannur block here is set to enter its next phase as 30 of the 53 works in the first phase have been completed.

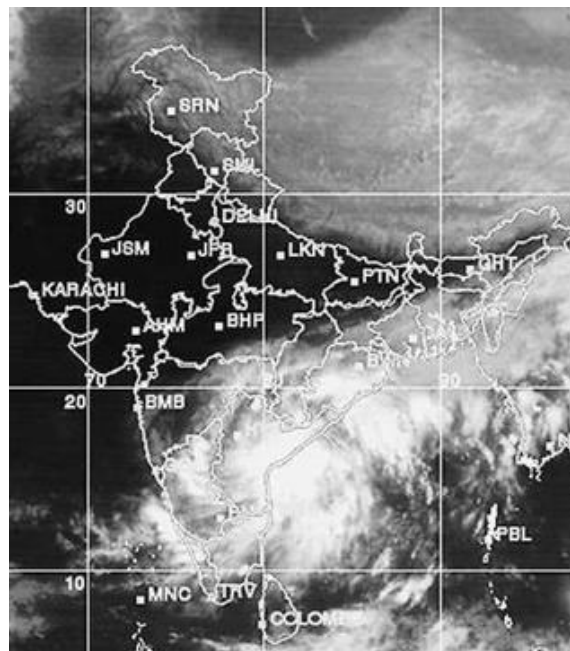
A press release here on Tuesday said that the works included activities aimed at recharging groundwater wells and river bank protection. Various watersheds in the Eramam- Kuttoor and Kadannappally- Panappuzha grama panchayats in the block were included in the programme.

The release said that groundwater recharging works had been carried out in open wells having lower water level. Streams in four watershed systems in the area had been cleaned and trees were planted on their banks, it said adding that cloth bags were distributed in all the households in the area to make it plastic-free.

As part of the programme, 3,000 saplings were disbursed among students in different schools in the block. Awareness classes and contests were also conducted and films featuring ecological concerns were screened.

Payyannur block secretary P.M. Rajiv said sign boards highlighting environmental messages would be displayed in the watershed areas. Booklets carrying information on the programme and other writings on environmental protection had been printed for distribution, he said in the release. Awareness classes were conducted for local-level watershed committees, self-help groups, and Kudumbasree units.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 14.00 hrs. Observations recorded at 8.30 a.m. on October 22nd.

	Max	Min	R	TR
New Delhi (Plm)	33	19	0	52
New Delhi (Sfd)	32	17	0	73
Chandigarh	31	18	0	29
Hissar	34	15	0	4
Bhuntar	27	10	0	5
Shimla	20	11	0	67
Jammu	30	17	0	122
Srinagar	26	5	0	15
Amritsar	31	17	0	77
Patiala	33	17	0	9
Jaipur	35	18	0	2
Udaipur	33	15	0	55
Allahabad	32	20	0	300
Lucknow	32	17	0	42
Varanasi	32	20	0	141
Dehradun	29	17	0	34
Agartala	29	23	1	168
Ahmedabad	35	20	0	63
Bangalore	26	19	3	39
Bhubaneshwar	32	23	49	384
Bhopal	32	18	0	26
Chennai	27	23	26	145
Guwahati	32	22	0	213
Hyderabad	30	23	4	127
Kolkata	31	24	8	340
Mumbai	33	23	0	66
Nagpur	32	21	0	167
Patna	31	22	0	194
Pune	32	16	0	22
Thiruvananthapuram	32	24	10	205
Imphal	28	19	1	49
Shillong	22	14	tr	63

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

MAINLY DRY WEATHER

Southwest monsoon has been withdrawal from entire region. The withdrawal line of southwest monsoon passes through Forbesganj, Bankura, Cuttack, Hanamkonda, Gulbarga, Ratnagiri, latitude 17 degree north/longitude 70 degree east and latitude 17 degree north/longitude 60 degree east.

Rainfall: Weather was dry over the region

MAXIMUM TEMPERTURE: The maximum temperature changed little over the region. They were above normal in Jammu and Kashmir and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 38.0°C recorded at Bikaner (Rajasthan).

MINIMUM TEMPERTURE: The minimum temperature changed little over the region. They were normal over the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 14.4°C recorded at Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST FOR REGION VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 24th OCTOBER

2013:Weather would be mainly dry over the region.

HEAVY RAINFALL WARNING: Heavy rainfall may occur at one or two places over east Uttar Pradesh on 14th October.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 24th OCTOBER 2013: Mainly Clear sky. Haze/mist in the morning.

hindustantimes

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Wednesday, Oct 23

Max Min

28° | 24°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 89

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:00

Sunset: 05:46

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Oct 24

Max Min

30° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday
Oct 25



31° | 24°

Cloudy

Saturday
Oct 26



29° | 26°

Overcast

Sunday
Oct 27



29° | 26°

Overcast

Monday
Oct 28



28° | 26°

Overcast

Tuesday
Oct 29



31° | 27°

Overcast

Sugar mill undervalued, sold to firm owned by Bhujbal's kin

Farmers and activists have raised a stink over the sale of the 292-acre Girna sugar co-operative mill to Armstrong Infrastructure Pvt Ltd, a firm owned by public works minister Chhagan Bhujbal's family, alleging that the mill was undervalued to benefit the firm. The mill had run up a debt of Rs. 35.49 crore, as a result of which the matter reached the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT).

Following valuation by government-recognised valuers in 2010, the DRT fixed the reserve price of the mill at Rs. 27 crore after which it was sold in an auction to Armstrong Infrastructure.

However, the mill was undervalued - while property prices rose between 2003 and 2010, the cost of the mill land dropped during this period.

Interestingly, after buying the mill, Armstrong Infrastructure mortgaged a portion of the land - 82 acres - and raised a loan of Rs. 30 crore from Nashik District Co-operative Bank.

“The valuation of the mill was fudged to benefit the company. Otherwise, how can a prime piece of land get undervalued from 2003,” said Uday Hirve, farmer and former member of Girna mill. He and other farmers have questioned why a similar procedure – of mortgaging land - was not adopted to pay back the dues and get the mill back on its feet.

Later, in July 2012, the bank’s report slammed the loan as irregular. The sale came at the cost of 7,300 farmers who were shareholders of the mill and the state exchequer, which handed out Rs7 crore in loans and subsidies to set up the mill. Many farmers gave up their land to set up Girna mill, while others borrowed to pay the total share capital of Rs. 2.20 crore.

Sameer Bhujbal, NCP MP, Bhujbal’s nephew and director of the company, said: “This mill was shut since 1995. We had nothing to do with the valuation. The purchase was done after DRT fixed a reserve price. We purchased it by making a formal bid.”

He said the HC has dismissed the farmers’ petition to cancel the sale. “They first begged us to buy the mill and get it running. I even paid arrears and farmers’ dues, but a section of them is playing political games to malign us,” he alleged. The farmers have filed an appeal in the apex court and the DRT.

Onion prices rise uncontrollably

Prices of onions, a staple for most Indians, surged worryingly in Delhi ahead of the year’s main festival season, as bad weather hampered harvests and food trucks, worsening a previous shortfall and stoking trouble for a poll-bound UPA government.

In most other market centers, such as Pune and Kolkata, “modal” wholesale prices, a broad average of the day’s lowest and highest prices for a quintal (100 kg), ruled steady at between Rs. 4,000 and 6,000 a quintal (Rs 40 and Rs. 50 a kg). Shop-end prices varied between Rs. 60 (Bangalore) and Rs. 80 (Mumbai) for a kg.

India’s annual domestic demand of onion is about 12 million tonne, while in 2012-13, the total output was 16 million tonne, down 6% from the previous year. A market analyst, requesting anonymity, said traders could be holding back stocks to raise prices.

Consumers in Delhi fretted as about a nearly 50% rise in prices in about three days to touch Rs. 100 a kg in some local markets, making the vegetable costlier than petrol.

The BJP-led government in Delhi had lost power in 1998 for its inability to control prices of onion – the base ingredient for most Indian meals.

Onion stocks usually bottom out during this time of the year, a seasonal phase when summer

harvests are nearly exhausted and winter harvests not fully ready.

This longer monsoon this year, which resulted in prolonged showers at a time when it usually tapers off, interrupted harvest operations of the summer crop, according to RP Gupta, the director of the National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF). Cyclone Phailin, which hit the eastern coast earlier this month, left large parts of Andhra Pradesh flooded, holding with food trucks.

Trucks have started moving as weather has begun to clear up, Bijender Singh, the chairman NAFED, a state-run food trading agency, said.

According to NHRDF forecasts, prices are expected to decline when summer harvests roll in by November.



FIRE IN THE KITCHEN

What's happening to onion prices

₹ 100 and rising
₹ 100 per kg in Patna, Bhopal, Srinagar. In most places, it's hovering around ₹ 70-80 per kg while in some places onion was being sold at ₹ 60-70 per kg

Not everywhere!
The only place, perhaps, where onion prices have come down is Chandigarh where it was being sold between ₹ 30-50 per kg

What the government is doing
Commerce minister blames hoarding by traders. Govt asks all states to get cracking against hoarders. Hints at ban on onion exports

The ghost returns
In 1998, angry voters of Delhi had ousted the government led by Sushma Swaraj after onion prices had sky-rocketed

graphic: vijendra s vij

Mother Dairy hikes milk prices in Delhi-NCR by Rs 2/ltr



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"Cattle feed and fodder contributes the bulk (almost 75 per cent) of the total cost of production of milk. Significant increase in the cattle feed & fodder and labor has led to the rise in overall cost of production," it explained.

Mother Dairy noted that close to 80 per cent of the total sale proceeds goes into the procurement of milk. "With this the Company ensures sustainability of dairy farming by milk producers. This is probably one of the most efficient means of ensuring inclusive growth". Increase in milk prices could have an impact on food as well as overall WPI inflation, which stood at 6.46 per cent and 18.40 per cent, respectively.

Mother Dairy sells about 30 lakh litres milk per day (both loose and poly-pack) in Delhi-NCR.

Besides Delhi-NCR, Mother Dairy is increasing the prices in cities like Mumbai, Lucknow, Kanpur, Pune and other places where its milk is sold. The company, however, did not give the details.

Food safety cell conducts checks at 20 shops, destroys 250 kg sweets

As the festive season takes off, the Food Safety Cell of UT health department is keeping an eye on all major sweet manufacturers in the city.

From October 15, food inspection officers have checked 20 sweet manufacturers and destroyed about 250 kg unhygienic sweets.

Under Epidemic Diseases Act, u/s 2, health officials are empowered to take immediate steps to ensure safety of residents, by taking precautionary measures. Health officials are empowered to destroy on the

spot food articles which are exposed to dust and flies and prepared in unhygienic conditions.

Making full use of Epidemic Diseases Act, the Food Safety Cell of UT Health Department has destroyed approximately 250 kg which was exposed to flies and were being made in unhygienic conditions.

The department has further warned the shop owners of action, in case they fail to maintain hygiene in future. So far, officers of Food Safety Cell of UT Health Department have conducted 16 surprise checks on sweet manufacturers in Chandigarh.

It includes Mahadev Sweets and Chandigarh Sweets from Daria Village, Ekashal sweets from Industrial Area, three Petha units in Palsora village, Sindhi sweets and others.

Twenty samples of sweet products like petha, dhodha and other products made of milk and khoya were seized and sent for analysis at food testing laboratories. Reports will be out in 14 days.

Dr Rajiv Khaneja, head, Food Safety Cell said,

"Most commonly, the adulteration cases are of substandard and misbranded products, in some cases the use of synthetic colours is also found."

As per the Food Safety and Standards Act, cases of adulteration and labelling falls in the categories of substandard and misbranded food, while the use of synthetic and major adulterated products, including harmful chemicals fall under the unsafe category.

Dr Khaneja added, "Synthetic colours and adulterated sweets are carcinogenic and can cause cancer and kidney stones. Its short-term effects can be vomiting, diarrhoea among other diseases."

"The surprise checks in the city will continue till the end of the festive season. The main purpose of these checks is to alert sweet manufacturers that they are being watched.

They better prepare, store and serve sweets in hygienic manner, otherwise, they will have to bear the consequences," a food safety inspector said.

DECCAN Chronicle

Veggie prices shoot up due to heavy rains



Picture for representational purposes only.

Chennai: A slump in supplies and heavy rains in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have resulted in hike in rates of onions.

The prices which had stabilised at Rs 40 until last week, shot up again to Rs 50-60 at Koyambedu wholesale market on Tuesday. The retail price would be Rs 70.

John V, a trader at the Koyambedu market, says, "The supplies have dwindled over the week and that has led to the price rise. It is going to continue until a week after Deepavali."

The prices of vegetables have experienced a similar hike of nearly Rs 5 to Rs 10 with the supply chain being hit by heavy rains in the production centres.

John adds, "Potatoes have gone up to Rs 20 from Rs 15. The prices may go a bit higher looking at Deepavali, but will come down eventually."

Maria S, a teacher and homemaker, says, "The spiralling prices of onion has returned to haunt us. We thought the prices would drop further, Rs 40 a kilo of onion is not affordable to many. "We just wish post-Deepavali, the prices normalise."

GOVT MAY BAN ONION EXPORTS TO CHECK PRICE RISE



The government is mulling banning onion exports to contain prices, which have risen back to the Rs 80-90/kg level in the national capital owing to supply crunch.

Not only in Delhi, consumers in other parts of the country are affected by rise in onion prices. In major cities, onion is being sold at Rs 60-80 per kg in retail markets.

The domestic availability of onion has been affected on account of damage to kharif crop because of unseasonal rains in key producing states including Maharashtra.

"Onion prices have gone up sharply. We are considering banning exports as there is not much scope to raise minimum export price (MEP)," a senior government official said.

Although exports have shown a decline after recent hike in the MEP, prices remain high as supply crunch has intensified with some damage to kharif crop due to unseasonal rains in key growing states, the official added.

The sharp rise in onion prices, after being stable at Rs 60/kg for some time, has forced the government to consider suspension of overseas sale of onions. A ministry level meeting has been scheduled today to discuss this issue.

Onion crisis is continuing from last three months. The government has taken several measures to check price rises but to no avail. It had slapped in August the MEP of USD 650 per tonne, which was later hiked to USD 900/tonne in September.

Due to curbs, onion exports fell by 28 per cent to 7,16,246 tonnes in the first six months of the current fiscal.

The government was expecting prices to fall sharply this month onwards on huge arrival of kharif crop but untimely rains have affected the crop and delayed the harvesting.

When contacted, Nashik-based government research body NHRDF Director R P Gupta said, "The kharif crop has got affected due to untimely rains in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka."

Currently, onion supplies are less than 50 per cent of the country's monthly estimated total demand of 9-10 lakh tonnes. The stored onions have also got exhausted now, adding to the price volatility. India produced 16.3 million tonnes of onion last year.

MILK PRICES ON THE BOIL, AGAIN!

With two hikes in just four months, milk prices are on the boil this season. Following the recent hike effected by Amul, now Mother Dairy has increased milk prices by Rs 2 per litre with effect from Wednesday, October 23. Both the leading milk companies had raised its rates in May, a phenomenon that didn't occur last year.

Amul, the market leader in pouch milk sale, had increased its milk prices by Rs 2 per litre from May 1. Similarly, Mother Dairy, the largest milk supplier in Delhi and National Capital Region region, had hiked it up to Rs 3 the same month. However, the scenario was much brighter in the Capital last year as these companies had raised their milk prices only once. While Amul had raised its rate in April 2012, Mother Dairy followed it up in September, the same year.

Business Standard

Onion prices will stabilise soon: Delhi govt

Obviously BJP govt's downfall in 1998 attributed to an onion crisis not too distant a memory for Congress camp



As [onion](#) prices touched a record Rs 80 a kg, the [Delhi](#) government on Tuesday said there was no crisis. According to the government, "temporary shortage" was driving prices and this would be resolved "within a week".

“Onion prices are fluctuating because the product is not reaching Delhi,” said Delhi Chief Minister [Sheila Dikshit](#). The state government has assured onions from Rajasthan will soon hit Delhi markets, bringing down the prices.

“Due to the excessive rainfall in south India, onion stocks from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh have been affected. So, there is a shortage in the market,” Raj Kumar Chouhan, a minister in the Dikshit government, told Business Standard.

Chouhan claimed there was no hoarding. He said 18 trucks with 200 tonnes of onion reached Delhi three days ago.

He added on a regular basis, 75 to 80 trucks carrying 1,100 tonnes of onion arrived in the capital every day.

In 1998, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party lost the Delhi Assembly elections to the [Congress](#) due to high onion prices, among other reasons — onion had touched Rs 60 a kg then. The Congress has ruled Delhi ever since.

Keeping in mind the ramifications of high onion prices, the Delhi government is trying hard to bring things under control. On Tuesday, Dikshit held a meeting with all stakeholders concerned. The government is now pinning its hopes on onion stocks from Rajasthan “which would stabilise prices”.

According to Delhi government sources, the government, if need be, could resort to selling onion through mobile vans - something it did just two months ago. When onion prices skyrocketed in August, the Delhi government sold onion at Rs 50 a kg from 1,000 points across the capital in mobile vans.

Respite likely on onion prices next week

Increased harvesting expected to boost supply



[Onion](#) prices are likely to begin falling in a week, with an expected increase in supply on intensified [harvesting](#), halted for two weeks due to extended rain.

Despite intermittent declines in the [wholesale](#) markets, consumers have continued to pay

highly for onions over an unusually sustained period of a little over two months.

Data compiled by the [Ministry of Consumer Affairs](#) show a huge difference between wholesale and retail prices. At the wholesale market at Vashi, Navi Mumbai, prices were Rs 48-52 a kg two months earlier and had fallen to Rs 36 a kg earlier this month; retail consumers continued to pay Rs 65–70 a kg throughout. In Delhi, the price was Rs 48.75 a kg in the wholesale market on Tuesday and Rs 69 a kg in retailing.

“The price difference between the wholesale and retail markets should be Rs 5-7 a kg; Rs 10 a kg at the most. Such a massive difference and for such a sustained period is unusual,” said R P Gupta, director, National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF). He said prices had moved up again after a decline due to disruption in harvesting of the kharif crop. Extended rainfall left too much mud in the field.

ALSO READ: [Govt mulls ban on onion exports, calls meeting of producer states](#)

After hitting a high of Rs 52 a kg a week earlier at the benchmark Lasalgaon mandi, the largest in Asia, the price fell to Rs 42.50 a kg on Tuesday.

ALSO READ: [Onion prices will stabilise soon: Delhi govt](#)

A week ago, a similar trend was seen. However, consumers in this city continued to pay Rs 60 a kg, according to official data. So, too, in Kolkata, where the wholesale price, said NHRDF, fell by Rs 4 to Rs 48.75 a kg a week earlier but recovered to hit Rs 52 on Monday, before again falling to quote at Rs 43.75 a kg on Tuesday. Yet, retail prices continued to remain at Rs 65 a kg on

ONION MOVEMENT								
Data compiled by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs show a huge difference between wholesale and retail prices (₹/kg)								
Markets	Wholesale				Retail			
	Spot	1-M ago	3-M ago	6-M ago	Spot	1-M ago	3-M ago	6-M ago
Delhi	49	50	19	9	69	70	36	18
Lucknow	70	61	20	15	75	70	25	20
Ahmedabad	43	50	23	–	45	52	25	–
Indore	45	38	20	8	55	52	30	15
Mumbai	50	55	25	9	60	62	32	16
Nagpur	40	50	15	12	45	65	25	18
Jaipur	45	40	15	11	60	60	27	18
Patna	50	55	25	14	55	58	27	15
Bhubaneswar	47	45	28	13	52	50	32	16
Kolkata	52	50	25	9	65	60	32	16
Bengaluru	30	40	26	16	32	45	28	18
Chennai	40	45	–	9	50	55	–	14

M: Month
Source: Ministry of Consumer Affairs

Tuesday.

“The implication of the price fall in the wholesale market comes with a week of lag to retail market, as the quantity in transit gets exhausted in this period. In this case, consumers will see the price decline after a week,” said Gupta.

“Retail market prices remained higher due to hoarding by a handful of large traders that book entire quantities directly from farmers and get delivery at their own convenience,” alleged Virendra Singh, chairman of the National Consumer Cooperative Federation. He said what was needed was improvement in the distribution network..

Rising prices put sesame seed exporters in a spot

Over 80-90% of sesame produced in India is exported. The major export markets are Japan, the US and South Korea, among others

The sharp increase in [sesame](#) seed prices owing to crop failure has put [exporters](#) in a tight spot. While most of them have made forward contracts at lower prices, they are now facing difficulty in meeting their export obligation as prices have almost doubled in the past few weeks.

According to insiders, over 80-90 per cent of sesame produced in India is exported. The major export markets are Japan, the US and [South Korea](#), among others. Many exporters had booked forward contracts for exports in the beginning of the season, anticipating lower prices. However, extended and heavy rains in Gujarat and other growing regions have dampened the crop prospects, thereby pushing up the prices to hit an all-time-high of Rs 3,000-3,100 for 20 kg.

Trade sources revealed that till September this year, exporters have made about 20,000 tonnes of forward trading for November and December delivery on average price of Rs 1,800 (for 20 kg). However, heavy rains, mainly in Gujarat, have damaged the sesame seed crop, resulting in reduced production estimates.

“In such a situation, where exporters will have to make delivery at earlier contracted price, many of them will default. Prices have touched all-time-high, which exporters did not anticipate. So, they are now facing trouble,” said Biren Vakil, a commodity expert in Ahmedabad. This happens because exporters will have to buy seeds from the domestic market at a much higher price than at which they had contracted with the foreign buyers.

Exporters believe that forward contract has spelled trouble for them. According to an industry estimate, exporters may face huge losses if prices continue to stay high for the remaining months of November and December. Insiders maintained that some exporters may default in delivery because of huge price difference between the present spot price and that of the forward contract they did in September. If they default, that could mar their reputation in the international market.

A Gujarat-based sesame seed exporter said: “Once we have committed, we have to deliver weather we are in profit or loss. There is no chance for negotiation on pricing. This time exporter might be in loss but it is not new thing for us.”

“It is difficult to ascertain the exact quantum of loss exporters may face. Presently, there is no monitoring system on sesame seed export’s forward trading. But a sharp price rise would surely put sesame seed exporters in trouble,” said Kishor Tanna, chairman of [Indian Oilseed and Produce Export Promotion Council](#).

He added that in case of any default in delivery by the exporters, if a buyer complaints to the government or IOPEPC, then only can the council know.

Recently, sesame seed prices have come down to Rs 2,800-2,900 per 20 kg owing to low demand because of high prices. At present, the daily arrival of sesame in Gujarat is 15,000-17,000 bags (of 50 kg each), while the India figure is 40,000 bags.

Rice production to be lower than estimated



The deluge in parts of [Odisha](#), resulting from [cyclone Phailin](#), and hailstorms in Punjab and Haryana recently are expected to hit [rice production](#).

Earlier, the fourth revised estimate (2013-14) of the [ministry of agriculture](#) had pegged the rice crop at 92.3 million tonnes (mt). Now, this seems a distant dream.

In 2012-13, Odisha contributed about 8.5 mt. Of the kharif acreage of 3.6 million hectares this year, 0.5 million hectares has been affected in Odisha. This year, production in the state might fall to one mt, said Trilochan Mohapatra, director of Rice Research Institute, Cuttak. He added the earlier estimate of 107 mt (kharif and rabi combined) might not be met, as adverse weather conditions had effected the crop in Odisha, western Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana.

Satnam Arora, joint managing director of Satnam Overseas Ltd (Kohinoor Rice), said the rice crop in Punjab and Haryana might record a loss of two-four per cent. Ashwani Arora, director of L T Overseas Ltd, said the crop had been hit by the delay in rains. He added production might be up to four per cent lower than estimated.

RICE OUTPUT		
(in million tonnes)		
Year	4th advanced*	Final estimates
2011-12	91.53	92.78
2012-13	92.76	-
2013-14	92.34	-

*Estimates (kharif)
Source: Ministry of Agriculture, GOI

In the 2012-13 kharif season, Punjab produced 16 mt of rice, while the output in Haryana stood at about eight mt.

The Rice Research Institute had sent various teams to affected areas in different states and a clear picture on production would emerge in about a week, Mohapatra said. In India, the kharif season accounts for 88 per cent of the total rice production. As a result, damage to the kharif crop might have a significant impact on the overall production, Mohapatra said.

Farmers said in Odisha, floods, more than the cyclone, had damaged the crop. But though the pre-mature and mature crop had been damaged, the early-stage crop could still be saved. While farmers might get some compensation from the government, it was too early to decide a course of action, said a farmer.

THE HINDU Business Line

ICAR seeks Rs 5,700 cr to beef up Krishi Vigyan Kendras in 12th Plan

Bangalore, Oct. 22:

Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has sought Rs 5,700 crore to strengthen Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK) in the 12th Plan.

During the 11th Plan, the allocation for KVK was Rs 2,000 crore.

K.D. Kakote, Deputy Director-General of ICAR, said: "We have sought massive funds to strengthen KVK infrastructure in the country mainly to take up extensive study related to climate change and recruit additional manpower."

"ICAR is also planning to install monitoring system of all the 634 KVKs spread across the country. At present, there is no mechanism to monitor them. Also there is a plan to create three more zones from the existing eight," he said.

KVK system, which came into existence in 1974, has become a vibrant institution of ICAR for technology assessment, refinement and dissemination in the country.

Through the effective use of KVKs, ICAR was able to give a boost to pulses production in the country. Kakote said: "From a stagnant production level of 14 million tonnes in 2008-09, after the introduction of Accelerated Pulses Production Programme supported by KVKs, we saw the production increase by four million tonnes and we were able to harvest 18 million tonnes in 2012-13."

This year, ICAR is planning to focus more on small farmers. "Currently, 40 per cent of the country's agricultural production is through small farmers. To enhance their income levels, we are working out a plan of developing location specific initiatives," said Kakote.

K. Narayana Gowda Vice-Chancellor, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, said: "In Karnataka, many models have been tested to enhance farm income. One example is that of generating Rs 1 lakh income from one acre of land holding through integrated approach of sericulture, dairy and poultry."

ICAR is holding its eighth national conference of Krishi Vigyan Kendras 2013 in Bangalore during October 23-25 at the University of Agricultural Sciences.

This year's meet will focus on solely on "sustainable intensification of smallholder forms".

"This year, we are deliberately taken the task of re-orientation of KVKs activities to help small farmers," said Kakote.

Urea sales rise as other fertilisers cost more

Continues to be sold at ridiculously low price that attracting the farmers,”

New Delhi, Oct 22:

Farmers continue to show their preference for cheaper urea, a trend reflected in the sales of the fertilisers.

Urea sales were up 11 per cent during the April-September this fiscal at 15.1 million tonnes against 13.6 mt in the corresponding period a year ago.

During the same period, sales of non-urea complexes, including the di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), dropped 17 per cent, according to industry estimates.

DAP sales were down by about a fifth at 3.2 mt during April-September against 4 mt last year.

Similarly, the sale of potash was marginally down at 1.07 mt against 1.1 mt in corresponding last year, while the offtake of NP/NPK nutrients declined 18.54 per cent to 3.03 mt against 3.73 mt last year.

The rising offtake of urea has left industry players worried.

The increased urea usage was not a healthy trend in the long run, as it would adversely hit soil, thereby, affecting farm productivity.

“The sales of non-urea complexes were down by about 30 per cent, while urea sales have increased by 12 per cent,” said U.S. Awasthi, Managing Director of Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative Ltd, the largest manufacturer and marketer of fertiliser in the country.

Excess rains this year had boosted kharif acreage by about five per cent with the total cultivated area estimated at 1,051 lakh hectares against last year’s 1,006 lakh hectares.

“Urea continues to be sold at ridiculously low price and that’s attracting the farmers,” Awasthi said.

The continued increase in application of urea would lead to imbalance in fertigation affecting soil health, he warned.

Urea, which is highly subsidised by the Government, is currently priced at Rs 5,360 a tonne, while DAP and muriate of potash (MoP) are priced at Rs 22,500 and Rs 16,000 a tonne, respectively.

The Government had de-controlled the prices of non-urea fertilisers, such as DAP and NPK, by introducing nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) in March 2010.

Since then, the prices of DAP have almost more than doubled from a level of Rs 9,350.

In the past four years, urea sales have gone up from 25 mt in 2009-10 to 30.15 mt in 2012-13. Poor demand amidst high stocks, carried forward from the last year, has also led to imports of fertiliser dropping this year.

“Our imports so far this year are about one million tonnes against 2 mt in the corresponding period a year ago,” said P.S. Gahlaut, Managing Director of Indian Potash Ltd, a large importer, adding that the growing imbalance in fertiliser was a cause for worry.

Gehlaut expects the demand for rabi season to be better than last year.

The fertiliser industry believes that despite lower sales this fiscal, the actual consumption could have been much higher, as huge stocks accumulated within the distribution chain seem to have been utilised. In the beginning of this fiscal, DAP stocks with the trade were estimated at 5.5 mt, while urea stocks were pegged at one million tonnes.

Kapil Mehan, Managing Director of Coromandel International Ltd, estimates actual consumption of phosphatic and potassic complexes this kharif to be higher at nine million

tonnes against 7.5-8 mt in the corresponding last year. “The stock pipeline that got built up with the distribution chain in recent years is getting liquidated,” Mehan added. Coromandel reported a 35 per cent increase in sales of manufactured volumes of phosphatic fertiliser during the September quarter this year, while its traded volumes were down 31 per cent for the period.

Arrival of poor quality stock grinds turmeric



Erode, Oct. 22:

Turmeric prices dropped on Tuesday as the quality of arrivals was poor. Only 50 per cent of the produce that arrived in Erode markets was sold on Tuesday. “On Tuesday, arrival increased to 3,000 bags, but the sale was only 50 per cent. Farmers expected 70-80 per cent to be sold due to the arrival of medium and inferior variety turmeric. Hybrid variety turmeric was also not improved as expected by farmers,” said R.K.V.

Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said that due to arrival of about 30 bags of fine finger variety turmeric in the Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Marketing Society, prices there increased. In Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard also, 50 bags of fine variety turmeric was sold at a higher price. The price of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra turmeric are still lower than Erode turmeric, so traders in North India are buying them.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,211-6,211 a quintal and the root variety Rs 3,766-4,906.

Salem Hybrid Crop: The finger variety fetched Rs 5,241-6,511; the root variety Rs 4,576-5,499. Of 653 bags that arrived, only 210 were sold.

At the Regulated Market Committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,014-6,034; the root variety Rs 4,374-5,117. Of the 563 bags on offer, 488 found takers. At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety quoted Rs 4,699-6,139 and the root variety Rs 4,169-5,042. Of the 535 bags put up for sale, 515 were traded.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 5,011-6,399; the root variety Rs 4,477-5,117. All the 88 bags were sold.

Nafed to canalise onion imports; China, Egypt eyed



Bringing more tears: Vendor sorting onions at a vegetable market at Patel Nagar in New Delhi. Prices at the retail market have shot up to Rs 70-85 a kg, depending on the quality, in the Capital. — Kamal Narang

Mumbai, Oct 22:

“The Centre is considering import of onion in order to augment supplies and contain rising prices,” K.V. Thomas, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Ministry of Food and Consumer Affairs, has said.

The Minister told *Business Line* that he held talks with Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and it was proposed to direct the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (Nafed) to source onion from overseas markets.

The most likely origins are China and Egypt.

“Consumer Affairs Secretary and senior management of Nafed are set to discuss plans for import and distribution of onions,” the Minister said.

Onion crop in many parts of the country, especially in Maharashtra – the largest producer – has been affected by the extended run of the South-West monsoon.

Harvest and crop movement is delayed. There are also reports of some traders hoarding and cartelisation.

The Government is keen to break the stranglehold, if any, of traders.

“We have asked the State Governments to take stringent action in case hoarding of onion or cartelisation of traders is detected,” Prof Thomas asserted.

He was slated to speak with the Chief Minister of Maharashtra on the issue.

In Delhi, onions are currently retailing at close to Rs 80 a kg.

With elections round the corner, there surely are concerns over not only high onion prices but also food inflation in general.

“I admit, there is some tightness in supplies at present; but we are hopeful, the situation will come under control and onion prices will moderate soon when new supplies hit the market,” the Minister said.

Our New Delhi Bureau adds: India will import more onions, if required, to contain the sharp rise in retail prices, Commerce and Industry Minister Anand Sharma has said.

Onion prices across the country are on a steady rise due to supply shortage with retail prices in Delhi set to cross Rs 100 a kg. Passing on major responsibility of the price escalation to States, the Minister said that hoarding of onions was the main reason behind artificial scarcity and sharp rise in prices and States need to act firmly against hoarders. The Minister was speaking to reporters at a meet of CLMV (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam) countries organised by industry body CII. Sharma said that despite adequate domestic availability, if required India would import more onions.

“If there is a need and we receive such a proposal, we will import onions to tide over the crisis and stabilise the situation,” the Minister added. Onion prices had started rising in July this year crossing Rs 30 in some markets as supplies got affected due to the effect of last year’s drought in some onion-growing States.

In August, prices rose further as supplies fell to a third at 17,000 tonnes compared to about 45,000 tonnes supplied in August 2012.

To prevent onions from being shipped out of the country, the Government imposed a minimum export price of \$650 a tonne in September which it subsequently increased to \$900. Last month, the Government imported onions from Pakistan, Egypt and China through public sector procurement agency Nafed, which helped to cool prices a bit. However, due to recent heavy rains in some parts of the country and increased consumption due to festivities, supplies are constrained again pushing up prices.

Earlier, speaking at the meet, the Minister said that India and the CLMV countries should look to deepen bilateral partnerships in areas such as agriculture, mining, oil and gas, energy, healthcare, skills development, and textiles.

Stressing on the importance of building overland, air and sea connectivity between India and the CLMV countries, Sharma said extension of the Trilateral India-Myanmar-Thailand Highway Project to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam will open up huge opportunities for trade, investment and tourism flows.

Modern warehousing systems need of the hour: K.V. Thomas

Mumbai, Oct. 22:

“Warehousing is a high-cost, low-profit business with gestation period rather long for warehousing infrastructure projects. Despite availability of automation and mechanisation, warehousing in India continues to be labour-intensive. Since fixed cost component is substantial, capital investments need to be planned so as to achieve break-even within limits of technical viability,” according to K.V. Thomas, Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

He was speaking at the inaugural session of the conference on building warehousing competitiveness 2013, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here on Tuesday.

Calling upon the banking sector to support development of the warehousing sector, he said: “Banks should be able to create a special package for warehouse promotion”.

Capacity expansion

Warehousing capacity with the Government has expanded in recent years, especially with rapidly rising procurement of foodgrains.

In 2009, the Government had about 59 million tonnes of warehousing space for storing foodgrains which has now been expanded to 78 mt. However, there is need for more. “By 2014, we will need space to store over 85 million tonnes of grains,” he said adding, “India needs modern warehousing systems and all warehouses should be certified and accredited with the warehousing authority.”

Food security act

Implementation of the National Food Security Act 2013 has rendered investment in scientific warehousing capacity more urgent.

The minister released a publication “Overview of the Indian Warehousing Industry”, produced jointly by the CII Institute of Logistics and Ernst & Young, a global advisory firm.

Arrival of imported chana turns outlook bearish



Indore, Oct. 22:

With arrivals outstripping demand, chana prices have begun to drop in Indore mandis over the last few days.

In absence of demand, chana (kanta) in has declined by Rs 100 in the past one week with price on Tuesday being quoted at Rs 3,000-3,050 a quintal (Rs 3,100-25 last week).

Chana (desi) declined by Rs 200 to Rs 2,700-2,800, chana (mausmi) ruled at Rs 3,000-3,300, while Kabuli Bitki ruled at Rs 2,900-3,000.

With about 20,000-25,000 tonnes of imported consignment likely to arrive from Australia at the Mumbai port, chana will come under further pressure, said Prakash Vora, a local wholesale pulse trader.

With the sowing area expected to rise this year, stockists are releasing their inventories, leading to a downtrend in prices.

Decline in spot chana, has also dragged its dal in the past one week almost by Rs 100 with chana dal (average) in Indore

mandis was being quoted at Rs 3,600-3,700, chana dal (medium) at Rs 3,800-3,900, while chana dal (bold) ruled at Rs 4,100-4,200. Slack demand and buying support have also dragged dollar chana both in the domestic and export market.

Dollar chana (chickpea) was quoted at Rs 3,600-4,000 amid an arrival of 5,000 bags in Indore mandis.

In container also, slack export demand has dragged dollar chana by almost Rs 300 with the 42/44 count at Rs 5,050-75 , 44/46 count at Rs 4,825-50, 46/48 count declined to Rs 4,625-50, 58/60 count at Rs 3,750-75, while dollar chana (60/62 count) ruled at Rs 3,625-50 a quintal.

Edible oils rule firm on lower-than-expected inflows



Mumbai, Oct. 22:

The sentiment in edible oils market remained positive on Tuesday, tracking firm futures and retail demand, ahead of Diwali. However, the volume was subdued as wholesalers and stockists kept away. Palmolein, groundnut and sunflower oil ruled unchanged. Rapeseed and cottonseed oil rose by Rs 2 for 10 kg each. Soyabean refined oil declined by Rs 2.

Sources said that in the local market, the volume was subdued. About 700-800 tonnes of palmolein and 60-80 tonnes of soyabean refined oil were traded in resale directly by local refineries. Arrival of

new soyabean is increasing at the producing centres but still they are lower than market expectations, supporting a firm trend in the spot market.

Towards the day's close, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 578, super palmolein at Rs 618 and super deluxe at Rs 638, soyabean refined oil at Rs 710 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 820. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 574 ex JNPT and Rs 577, soyabean refined oil Rs 695 and sunflower refined oil Rs 771. Allana was quoting palmolein at Rs 574-576, super palmolein Rs 611 and sunflower refined oil Rs 820.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil was mixed at Rs 1,260 (Rs 1,240) for *telia* tin and loose (10 kg) at Rs 790 (Rs 800). Soyabean arrivals were about 8.75 lakh bags and prices were Rs 3,250-3,450 ex mandi and Rs 3,450-3,550 plant delivery. Mustard arrivals were one lakh bags and its prices were Rs 3,200-3,800.

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil's November futures closed higher at MYR 2,458 (MYR 2,431), December at MYR 2,458 (MYR 2,437) and January at MYR 2456 (MYR 2437).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: groundnut oil 840 (840), soya refined oil 695 (697), sunflower exp. ref. 735 (735), sunflower ref. 785 (780), rapeseed ref. oil 737 (735), rapeseed expeller ref. 707 (705) cottonseed ref. oil 695 (693) and palmolein 573 (573).

Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Rs 640/10 kg for Malaysia super palmolein November delivery.

Fresh buying lifts groundnut, cotton oils



Rajkot, Oct. 22:

After sharp decline during the past four days, groundnut oil was increased as fresh buying emerged at the lower level for festival season. Cotton oil was also up marginally.

Groundnut oil loose at the wholesale market was traded higher by Rs 25 to Rs 820-825 for 20 kg.

Jamnagar line *telia* tin gained Rs 38 to Rs 1,273-1,274 for 15 kg.

New tin of groundnut was increased Rs 10 to Rs 1,485-1,490 for 15 kg. About 8-10 tankers of groundnut oil were traded in Saurashtra.

Traders said that groundnut oil prices have decreased by nearly Rs 65 a tin during the last four days due to higher availability of groundnut for crushing and slow demand. But today there was fresh buying in the market for Diwali .

Traders believe that price may not increase much as new arrival of groundnut is on the rise. A similar trend was seen in cotton oil also. Price of cotton oil increased marginally with support of festival demand and limited crushing in the mills.

Washed cottonseed oil traded at Rs 645-648 for 10 kg and cotton oil new tin gained Rs 5 to Rs 1,140-1,145 for 15-kg new tin. About 25-30 tankers of cotton oil were traded.

Mills refuse to sell sugar cheap



Mumbai, Oct. 22:

Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market declined by Rs 15-25 a quintal for M-grade and Rs 5-13 for S-grade on higher selling pressure at upper level. *Naka* and mill tender rates were unchanged as mill refused to sell at a lower price, resulting in the volume dropping.

Activities were restricted at ample stocks are available in the market. Prices on domestic futures market dropped on profit booking. Jagdish Rawal of B. Bhogilal & Co said that in

Vashi arrivals and local dispatches were routine. Demand for the fine variety continued to be higher ahead of Diwali. The market carries ample stocks and producers are continuously selling in local markets in absence of neighbouring States' buying. Arrivals in Vashi market were 61-62 truckloads (100 bags each), while local dispatches were also 61-62 truckloads. On Monday, 19-20 mills offered tenders and sold about 39,000-40,000 bags at Rs 2,700-2,840 (Rs 2,700-2,840) for S-grade and Rs 2,880-3,000 (Rs 2,880-3,000) for M-grade. **Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were:** S-grade Rs 2,900-3,042 (Rs 2,892-3,055) and M-grade Rs 3,011-3,256 (Rs 3,026-3,282). **Naka delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 2,830-2,920 (Rs 2,830-2,920) and M-grade Rs 2,950-3,120 (Rs 2,950-3,120). **Uttar Pradesh rates were:** Lakhimpur Rs 3,315 and Muzzafarnagar Rs 3,225.

Corporates defer buying dearer coconut oil



Kochi, Oct. 22:

Coconut oil prices continue to rule firm in Kerala and Tamil Nadu as buyers are carrying on with purchases.

Prices in Kerala touched Rs 94 a kg on Wednesday against Rs 93 two days ago, whereas in Tamil Nadu, they quoted at Rs 92, up Rs 2 over the last two days.

Copra prices are also ruling at Rs 7,000 a quintal in Kerala and in Tamil Nadu, they touched Rs 6,800.

According to Thalath Mahamood,

Director, Cochin Oil Merchants Association, inclement weather has affected arrivals of copra and the situation is expected to continue in the short-term. This was one of the reasons for the coconut oil prices to rule firm.

Palm oil prices, on the other hand, have begun to cool down to Rs 53 a kg.

Bharat N. Khona, former Board Member of the association, said that the short supply of copra has made coconut oil dearer, thereby affecting the demand. This has also affected upcountry demand and corporate buying. Consumers are now showing their intention to shift to other edible oils which are currently ruling low.

Loose oil prices in Tamil Nadu are ruling at Rs 1,350 for 15 kg, he said.

Meanwhile, arrivals of adulterated coconut oil in Kerala have been reduced following the stringent quality checks carried out by the Food Safety authorities at border check posts.

Thalath Mahamood said that action in this regard has been necessitated following complaints from traders that palm kernel oil, which is a close substitute of coconut oil, is widely used for adulteration.

The decline in prices of palm kernel at Rs 62 a kg after hitting a high of Rs 72 last week is a pointer towards this, he added.
