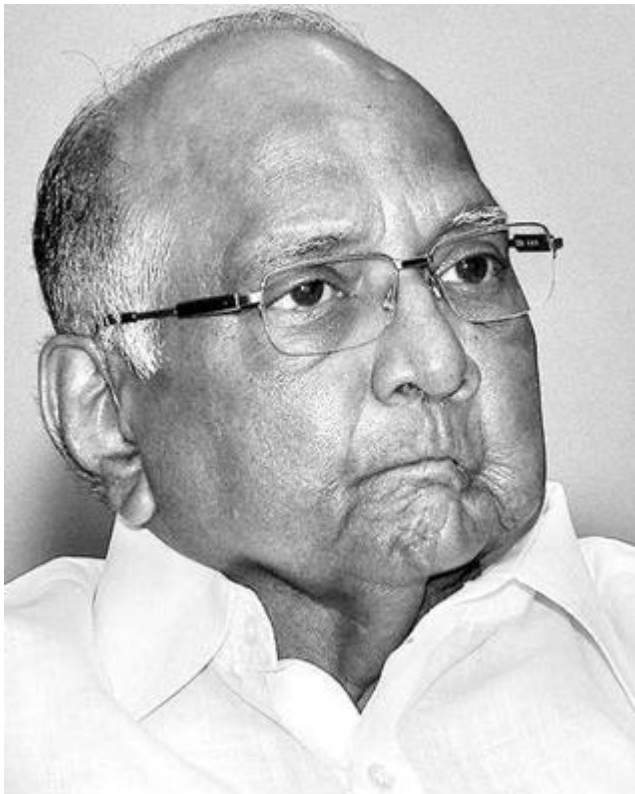


India floats tender for import of onion

Despite the abnormally high price of onion in major cities, the government will not ban its export. It has, however, taken a decision to quickly import onions from Pakistan, Iran, China and Egypt.



Onion prices are threatening to touch Rs. 90 per kg in major cities. Even government outlets like the Mother Dairy in Delhi are selling the bulb at Rs. 68 per kg.

Indicating that there will be no immediate respite from the situation, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said in Bangalore that the next two to three weeks will be tough. Normally, the kharif crop starts arriving by the end of October or early November.

The Ministry has convened a meeting of onion-producing States on Thursday to assess the situation and “find a solution.” On Wednesday, the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India floated a tender for import of onion on government account. It has sought responses before October 30. To hasten the process, Nafed has decided to allow fumigation of imported produce that arrive without fumigation and

Phytosanitary treatment, at Indian ports. Such a consignment would be inspected by quarantine officials and released only if found free of pests and diseases of concern to India. Normally, consignments that arrive without fumigation are subject to “four times the penal fees” but Nafed has decided to waive that.

Extended rain in onion-producing States such as Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and Cyclone Phailin in Andhra Pradesh is said to have had an adverse impact. But overall, it is felt that some big framers and traders are holding on to the produce for speculation.

Between April and September this year India exported 7.16 lakh tonnes of onion. During 2012-13, when the production was 166.55 lakh tonnes, the country exported 18.23 lakh tonnes, but in 2011-12, when the output was higher (175.11 lakh tonnes), there were lower exports at 15.53 lakh tonnes.

So far there have been no imports of onion on government account.

Govt. does not have power to control onion prices: official

The State government neither has the power to regulate onion prices in the State nor can it impose a ban on the transport of onions to other States. “Our growers are getting better prices and we will not impose a ban unless the Centre directs us,” said M.K. Shankarlinge Gowda, Principal Secretary, Department of Horticulture, to presspersons here on Wednesday. Onion prices in Bangalore have been wavering between Rs. 30 and Rs. 60 per kg depending on the quality.

The government only provides minimum support price to ensure stable prices for various commodities in the market. Incessant rain and hoarding of the produce are not the causes for the price rise. Shortage of the crop and high demand has resulted in a countrywide price rise, he said. Minister for Horticulture Shamanur Shivashankarappa was also present at the news conference.

Alternative

The State’s onion crop is expected in the market by the end of the month. The department is also mulling over the possibility of taking up onion cultivation during the rabi season. The present cultivation is restricted to the kharif season. The farmers of Maharashtra cultivate onions during the rabi season and this produce is stored for several days. The State’s onions cannot be stored for long on account of high water content, he said.

Meanwhile, Union Agriculture Ministry officials have decided to hold a video-conference with State Horticulture Department officials to assess the demand and supply of onions in the State and the rest of the country.

Import is the only way to tackle onion price rise: Pawar

Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on Wednesday indicated that onion prices were likely to remain high for the next two to three weeks.

“I am not an astrologer to predict the prices. I am not even the Minister concerned with this subject. But I know the condition of the [onion] crop,” Mr. Pawar told reporters here on the sidelines of the inaugural session of the national conference of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras.

Late monsoon showers

Pointing out that the destruction of the standing crop by late monsoon showers too resulted in reducing availability, he said fresh arrivals were expected in two to three weeks when the standing crop in prominent onion-growing regions was expected to mature for harvesting.

“The next two weeks are going to be tough and we need to find a solution. The only way of tackling this is resorting to imports. The good thing is that there is adequate availability in the markets of several countries including China, Egypt and Iran,” he said.

Observing that there was a strong possibility that onion produce was being hoarded, the Minister urged States to act ruthlessly against the hoarders.

Pointing out that the Union Food Minister had already directed all Chief Ministers to act against illegal hoarding, Mr. Pawar asked States to use the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act against hoarders.

He ruled out the possibility of exports of onions leading to shortage in the domestic market. “How can there be exports when the export prices are only \$ 500-550 a tonne as against the domestic prices of \$900?,” he remarked.

Discussion in Delhi

Mr. Pawar said the issues related to onion prices would be discussed in Delhi on Thursday when the Food Minister meets him.

‘Prices likely to remain high for the next two to three weeks’

Onion ruling at Rs. 60 in Mangalore markets

Onion prices in the city have risen by up to Rs. 20 since last week. The staple commodity is priced at around Rs. 60 across local markets – Central Market, Jeppu Market, Karangalpady and Kadri.

Last week, the retail price was Rs. 40 and wholesale price was Rs. 35.

“We slightly vary the prices based on size. If the onions are bigger, we charge Rs. 65 per kg but mostly it is Rs. 60,” said retail vegetable vendor Ganesh in Kadri Market.

Another vegetable merchant Pushpavati at Jeppu Market said, “People who regularly used to buy about 2 kg have now started buying 1 kg or less because of the high cost. Our margin has also reduced. Earlier we made a decent Rs. 4 per kg, now we’re lucky to make Rs. 2.”

Ravichandra Shetty, Manager of HOPCOMS vegetable store in Karangalpady, said that this price rise was not due to any rainfall-related or climatic conditions but because of hoarding and lobbying in the State. He said, “Onions, tomatoes and potatoes are staple food and people will buy them even if the prices are higher.” Along the same lines, Valencia resident Sunita said, “We need to buy nearly 2 kg onions for a week, we cannot compromise on this because of the cost.”

Nevertheless, wholesale dealer at Central Market J. Shekar believes Mangalore may not be hit adversely by the soaring prices in relation to other regions because of the influx of onions from places such as Shimoga and Chikmagalur. He said a consignment that he had sent to a retailer was returned and he had sold it to another retailer for Rs. 33 a kg last week.

More tears: onion, tomato rates to hit the roof again

Intermittent rains damage crops and stocks stored at market yards

Precious commodity: Vendors selling onions on the pavement outside the wholesale onion market in Malakpet on Wednesday.-



Photo: G. Ramakrishna

Consumers will have to dig deeper into their pockets as prices of onions and tomatoes may shoot up further due to intermittent rains lashing different areas in the State.

Already, the prices of onions and tomatoes have hit the roof in the retail market and rythu bazaars.

Authorities expect the prices to increase even more in the next few days.

Currently, onions are offered at a subsidized price of Rs. 33 per kg and retail price of Rs. 45 per kg at different rythu bazars in the capital.

Higher in retail outlets

The prices are higher in retail outlets and malls and depending on the quality, they are offered between Rs.60 to Rs.70 per kg.

Similarly, the prices of tomatoes have increased by Rs.15 in a week.

Last week, they were offered at Rs.22 per kg in rythu bazars and are now being sold at Rs.36 per kg. The same tomatoes are offered for Rs. 40 per kg in mobile rythu bazars and about Rs. 45 per kg in retail outlets in different localities.

The prices are likely to increase a bit in the next few days.

Due to the heavy rains, many crops were covered under sheets of water and stocks stored at different market yards were damaged.

Delay in arrivals

In Kurnool, large quantities of onion stocks were damaged due to the rains and this would affect arrivals to the capital and eventually the prices would go up, explained an estate officer of rythu bazar.

Likewise, tomatoes are generally transported from Madanapalle and the situation there too is not bright. The quantum of increase in prices will depend on the arrivals in wholesale markets.

If the arrivals are hit, then the prices will shoot up, he adds.

Haryana to take action against onion hoarders

After the Centre asked the States to act tough against hoarders in the wake of soaring onion prices, Haryana government on Wednesday announced to launch a special drive to prevent hoarding of the bulb in the State to keep a check on its prices.

The onion in mission mode

With the onion price issue on the boil, Assam government is escalating its local cultivation to plug the drainage of revenue for procurement from other States



To tilt the scales: Assam produces 7.2 per cent of its total annual requirement of onions. PHOTO: K. Murali Kumar

As spiralling prices of onion continue to burn holes in consumers' pockets with retail prices hovering around Rs. 70 or 80 a kilogram, the Assam government has decided to grow onions in a mission mode in the State to make this high value perishable commodity locally available at a cheaper price and reduce the flight of State's revenue in its procurement from outside.

According to the Directorate of Horticulture and Food Processing, Assam produces about 7.20 per cent (approximately 30.90 thousand MT) of the total annual requirement, while 92.80 per cent (3.98 lakh MT) of the requirement is sourced from outside the State which results in heavy drainage of revenue. The State's annual requirement of onion is estimated at 4.29 lakh MT against the national per capita availability rate of 13.76 kg.

As the State is heavily dependent on supply from outside, onion becomes scarce during July and September due to short supply from onion growing sources. According to the statistics of the Horticulture Division, Ministry of Agriculture, total area under onion production in Assam for the year 2012-13 is only 8.53 thousand hectare while the productivity is as low as 3.62 MT/hectare. Compared to these, Gujarat, which tops the list of States in onion productivity, has 28.85 thousand hectare area under onion production while it registered total production of 7.04 lakh MT and productivity of 24.42 MT/hectare.

Under the mission mode, Assam now plans to expand area under onion production by bringing vast tracts of cultivable land of *chars* and *chaporis* (sand bars) formed in the course of river Brahmaputra. Mission operational areas will include these riverine belts in seven

districts of Jorhat, Nagaon, Marigaon, Darrang, Kamrup, Barpeta and Dhubri.

“The *char*, *chaponi* areas are considered as established onion belts having light textured soil suitable for growing onion,” says Mowsam Hazarika, SDAO(Information), Directorate of Horticulture and Food Processing.

The five-year-long onion mission has five basic components: expansion of area; production and productivity with high yielding variety and critical production inputs; seed production in rain-shadow belts of the State; creation of infrastructural facility for post harvest handling, packaging and storage; setting up modern cold storage based on Ultra Oxazine Technology and capacity building of farmers and stakeholders.

The Directorate of Horticulture and Food Processing, which is the nodal agency for the mission, has projected that “large bulk of stored onion shall help in mitigating quantitative crisis during the lean period and aid in regulating market price”. Besides, the mission will “open up avenue for the onion farmers of the State to participate in agri-trade with ASEAN and neighbouring SAARC countries in due course”.

Mr. Hazarika says that despite scope for onion production, farmers in the State are reluctant to increase production as storage of the perishable commodity has still remained a challenging task. The mission aims at addressing storage related issues by providing cold storage linkage not only to take care of the lean period from July to September but also for long term storage of fresh onions. The harvesting period for late kharif and rabi onion in Assam is from January to March. The mission targets to increase the productivity of onion from existing 3.62 MT/hectare to 10 MT/hectare in 2013-14 rabi season, the first year of the five-year mission.

Integrating poultry, fish and rice to triple income



Demonstration plot: The model offers multiple benefits.— Photo: Special arrangement

Instead of growing only a single crop, farmers can try and diversify agricultural activities like dairy, bio-gas, mushroom, fish, poultry, silkworm rearing, or apiary along with crops to get a higher income. This also helps in effective recycling of waste products from the animals and

birds as manure for crops and cuts down input cost to a major extent.

Feasibility

The feasibility of such a model integrating rice/fish and poultry was taken up by Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu, and its impact on the farmers’ lifestyle is being studied for the last 15 years. It was found that the model, apart from being helpful in generating some revenue, also helps in weed control by 40 per cent, and pest incidence by 30 per cent in paddy crops. “The model was field tested in different villages during 2004-07. At present it is being implemented in Cuddalore, Villupuram and Nagapattinam districts. Nearly 600 farmers have adopted this model in the last five years, and the annual income of these small cultivators has

gone up from Rs. 30,000 (only crop cultivation in 1-2 acres) to Rs. 60,000,” says Dr. R.M. Kathiresan, Professor and Head, Dept of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University.

Resource-poor farmers adopting low input agriculture are the main beneficiaries of this system. The simple reason is that it offers multiple benefits like bio-control of pests, infestations, weeds, and better crop growth because the fish feed on the pests and insects attacking the rice plant and poultry droppings are constantly washed into the field making it more fertile and conducive for healthy crop growth.

Why this study?

But why did the University take up fish and poultry with paddy cultivation?

“There is plenty of data available on rice/ fish/poultry integrated model in several Universities across the country. But if you study closely, you will find that in an acre, a pond would have been dug and a poultry cage erected over it. The paddy crop will be grown in a plot adjacent to this.

“There will be no connection to all the three activities. But in our model we have carefully planned to avoid such a gap and implemented it in such a way that all three are connected to each other,” says Dr. Kathiresan. He went on to explain how it is different from other models.

Easy replication

Replicating this model is quite easy, according to him. For example in an acre (100 cents) beneficiary farmers are growing paddy in 90 cents. In five cents they grow fishes like grass carp, common carp, roghu, cutla in a trench (one feet depth and width) on one side of the field.

In the remaining five cents poultry cages propped up on concrete poles are erected fitted with wire meshes. The cage is erected in such a way that a part of the cage is above the water-filled trench and the remaining part over the paddy crop.

A part of the bird droppings falls directly into the water as feed for fishes and the remaining on the fields as manure for the crop.

During single rice cropping season (about 5-6 months) poultry can be reared three times. Common NPK fertilizer schedule for rice is being followed as basal input, but farmers are cautioned not to practice split application of the chemical fertilizers as it may affect good fish growth. Also as plant protection measures, neem kernel extract is used instead of spraying chemical insecticides.

Marketing

Regarding the marketing of fish and birds Dr. Kathiresan says, “We encouraged the farmers to form groups and open a marketing outlet and bank account. The income from the sale of fish and poultry is deposited in the account and later shared.

“The University supplied the first batch of chicken and fishes to the farmers and after the first harvest farmers themselves started purchasing them. We have received sanctions to start more such models in the region after receiving a good response from both the farmers and the Government.”

For more information farmers can contact Dr. R.M.. Kathiresan, Professor and Head, Dept of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University: 608002, email rm.kathiresan@sify.com, mobile:9655188233.

A machine for dehulling millets

Owing to the absence of suitable primary processing, semi processed raw materials and appropriate value addition technologies, the production and processing of small millets remains constrained.

Difficult work

Dehulling (removal of husk) millets is a difficult task owing to its small size and husk.

Without husk removal, it is impossible to explore the full potential of the grains.

Traditionally, women do this unpleasant, laborious and inefficient hard work. Manually a woman with a pestle and mortar can dehull about 1.5 kg per hour providing a non-uniform poor keeping quality kernel.

The dry, moistened or wet millet grain is normally pounded with a wooden pestle in a wooden or stone mortar for making flour which is slightly wet due to moisture.

Aiming to eliminate this drudgery the Central Institute of Agricultural Engineering (CIAE, ICAR), Bhopal has developed a machine for millet processing. The machine has a capacity of grinding 100 kg in an hour at 10-12 per cent moisture content. It operates with one horse power single phase electric motor and can process even one kg of grains. The separation of the husk is simultaneous with a suction arrangement and cyclone separator attached to the machine.

It is suitable for dehulling foxtail, little, kodo, proso and barnyard millets and is provided with provisions to adjust between the dehulling surfaces to suit the different sizes of minor grains.

Efficiency

The dehulling efficiency of the machine is about 95 per cent and is priced at Rs. 50,000. It is eco-friendly, because it does not allow the dehulling husk mass to escape into the air directly and is gently trapped and collected. While being operated the noise pollution is kept under control unlike other hulling machines that produce a lot of sound. It does not require any hard labour and is worker-friendly.

(Dr. S. Balasubramanian, Principal Scientist, CIAE-Regional Centre-IEP, Coimbatore-3, Tamil Nadu, E-mail: balacipheth@gmail.com, Mobile: 8681017811.)

Gold doesn't grow on trees, but lies beneath them

Gold-prospecting companies collect soil samples from deep in the ground in their search for new deposits, but a quicker and cheaper way is studying the leaves of trees, scientists in Australia said Wednesday.

Melvyn Lintern, a geochemist with the government-funded Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), said analyzing leaves first rather than going to the huge expense of drilling core samples was a technique that had already been harnessed. The method developed by his Perth-based research team has led to investment in two Australian mines with the potential to produce billions of dollars' worth of gold. Lintern, whose research was funded by some of the world's biggest gold producers, has shown that trees sitting on gold deposits suck up minuscule amounts of the precious metal.

This is especially true in times of drought, when they seek moisture at great depths.

“Acacias and eucalypts are deep rooted and able to pick up trace amounts at quite incredible depths,” he said. “They are bringing up gold from 30 metres — the equivalent of a 10-storey building.” The trees treat the gold as toxic and store it away in their leaves for easy disposal. Shedding the leaves sheds the potentially toxic gold.

“This is the key finding,” Lintern said. “The speculation was that the gold was on the leaves after being blown there in the wind, but we’ve proved the gold is actually in the leaves of the tree.” By sampling vegetation rather than drilling for soil samples, prospectors can find deposits more cheaply.

“You can do a first pass using vegetation,” he said. “The other thing is the possibility of opening up new ground. For example, arid areas like sand dunes have been notoriously difficult to explore using drilling.” Work his team has done on eucalyptus trees growing on 8-metre sand dunes has found gold accumulating not just in leaves but in roots as well. Lintern said the findings were authenticated using a football-field sized synchrotron — a particle accelerator — in Melbourne, where images of the gold were produced. The deposits are minute — you would need the particles from 500 trees to produce a wedding ring.

“It’s not that we want people to harvest the trees in any way but use them as windows into what’s under them,” Lintern said. — **DPA**

Farmers seek higher milk procurement price



‘Price should match the hefty price hike in cattle fodder’

agitated:Members of Tamil Nadu Milk Producers Association staging a demonstration in front of the Dharmapuri District Milk Producers Cooperative Union Limited on Wednesday demanding that the milk procurement price be hiked.- Photo:N.Bashkaran.

The Tamil Nadu Milk Producers Association (TNMPA) took out a rally and staged a demonstration in front of the Dharmapuri District Milk Producers’ Cooperative Union Limited (DDMPCU)

in Krishnagiri on Wednesday demanding increase in procurement price of milk .

Over one thousand farmers took out the rally from five road junction near DDMPCU on the Krishnagiri-Salem National Highway.

Addressing the farmers, K. Mohammed Ali, state president, TNMPA said that the farmers wanted to fix the procurement price of cow’s milk at Rs. 25 per litre, and that of buffalo milk at Rs. 35 per litre. The increase in procurement price of milk should match the hefty price hike in cattle fodder, he said.

The state government hiked the procurement price of cow’s milk by Rs.2 per litre and buffalo milk by Rs. 6 per litre in 2011.As the input costs of fodder have increased by 50 per cent than that of 2011, farmers faced difficulty in managing the cattle.

Government should give freedom to the District Milk Producers' Cooperative Union to fix selling price for the by-products of milk, he added. Mr. Ali also demanded the government to establish fodder manufacturing facilities in all the districts and extend quality fodder to the farmers at 50 per cent subsidy.

Milk producers' should also be given interest free loans for purchase of milch animals and procuring crops. The association demanded the government to revive the defunct Dharmapuri-Krishnagiri Milk Producers Cooperative Employees Credit and Thrift Society. Mr. Ali pointed out that a 60 kg bag of Aavin feed that was priced at Rs. 650 in November 2011, has now increased to Rs. 998.

Noting that the price of feed that is marketed by private players has increased much more, he felt that it has forced small farmers to sell their cows at a low price.

The government's recent announcement on extending cattle feed at 25 per cent subsidy by Aavin is yet to be implemented properly, he said. M. Arumugam, Dharmapuri district president, TNMPA presided.

Farmers' grievances meet tomorrow

The agricultural grievances day for October will be held at 10.30 a.m. at the District Collectorate here on Friday. Petitions already submitted will be taken up for discussion and all farmers are requested to take part in the deliberations and raise farm related issues to get them solved, according to a press release issued here by the District Collector S. Jayandhi.

— Staff Reporter

FMD: Centre to help State farmers buy new cattle



Pawar suggests doubling compensation to Rs. 50,000 for a head of cattle

Relief: Union Minister for Agriculture Sharad Pawar, Governor H.R. Bhardwaj and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah displaying the souvenir during the inaugural function of the 8th national conference of the Krishi Vigyana Kendras 2013 in Bangalore on Wednesday.— Photo: Sampath Kumar G.P.

The Centre has offered to extend a helping hand to the State in the wake of the foot-and-mouth disease. Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on Wednesday offered to not only give funds to farmers to purchase new cattle but also suggested that the State double the compensation amount from Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000.

“I think the present compensation is inadequate. It is better to double it. We will be able to give adequate funds even if you double the compensation amount,” he told the State

government at the inaugural session of a three-day national conference of the Krishi Vigyana Kendras, being jointly organised here by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore.

He said technical norms did not provide for giving compensation towards the disease. Hence the Centre would provide funds for purchase of new cattle.

e-Extension centre

Stressing the need for revamping the agricultural extension system to address new challenges, Mr. Pawar said a research institute on 'e-Extension' was being set up by the Centre to provide research support for strengthening the extension system.

He said efforts were on to put in place the new system, which would encourage a range of service providers through an appropriate mix of public, private and voluntary funding and delivery mechanisms, besides using latest communication technologies.

Mr. Pawar asked the KVKs to help farmers to form associations for taking up collective bargaining to get remunerative prices for their produce. Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged the KVKs to take up the task of capacity building among farmers in marketing skills.

Earlier, Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda urged the Centre to come out with a regulatory mechanism for monitoring the quality of bio-pesticides. He alleged that the lack of such a mechanism was being misused by some companies, who were cheating farmers by selling spurious produce. "Thirteen of the 25 bio-pesticide samples, which were tested for quality by the State government, had chemical components," he told Mr. Pawar.

One-time grant

He announced that the Union Agriculture Ministry had recommended a one-time grant of funds to the UAS-B as an incentive after the varsity was adjudged the best agricultural university in the country for the second consecutive year in 2012-13. Pointing out that the recommendation was pending with the Finance Ministry, he appealed to Mr. Pawar to expedite the process. Sources said that the UAS-B had sought a one-time grant of Rs. 100 crore.

Governor H.R. Bhardwaj hailed the UAS-B for its work in teaching, extension and research work. He stressed the need for providing health and educational schemes for farmers and their families.

Awards were presented on the occasion to several KVKs, including the Bangalore Rural KVK, for their outstanding contributions to the extension system.

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- Need for revamping the agricultural extension system stressed*
 - A research institute on 'e-Extension' is being set up*
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It's only for big corporates: farmers' body

Alleging that the World Agricultural Forum (WAF) Congress beginning here on November 4 was a show organised by and for big corporates, the Rythu Samaikhya Vedika has demanded that the State government withdraw from it. Kiran Kumar Vissa and G.V. Ramanjaneyulu of the Vedika representing farmers' organisations and civil society groups said it was clear from the agenda of the congress that it was dominated by big agri-business MNCs promoting their

own “solutions” to the world’s agriculture related problems. Instead of serving the interests of the “small farmholders” as claimed, it was only meant for furthering the cause of the big agri-business corporates.

They said the forum itself was set up by some of these corporates to influence policymakers across the world. Associating itself with such a forum as co-organiser and then supporting its line that it would shape the agriculture policy was not proper on the part of the AP government. Public funds should not be spent on such events that only serve the cause of the corporates.

Problems of LLC ignored: farmers

The farmers and managing committee representatives of Tungabhadra Low Level Canal are unhappy that the AP and Karnataka governments were not giving due attention to their problems.

The representatives of two governments are likely to meet on Thursday at Bangalore to discuss the proposed parallel canal for High Level Canal that supplies water to Anantapur and Kadapa districts.

The Anantapur farmers led by Revenue Minister N. Raghuvveera Reddy could succeed in convincing the Karnataka counterparts for a parallel flood flow canal to augment supply to the HLC which is unable to meet the irrigation demand.

T. Rami Reddy, member of Project Committee of LLC, lamented that the AP government could have taken the issues of LLC and HLC instead of concentrating only on one canal saying the farmers under LLC were also suffering equally due to inadequate supply of water. The LLC was allocated 24 tmcft for AP area but only six to seven tmcft was reaching the ayacut.

The short supply was on account of diversion of water to unauthorized areas in Karnataka.

The LLC farmers suggested any of the three solutions to overcome the problem which include bypassing the canal from 72 km point to 185 km or enhancing the carrying capacity from 2400 cusecs to 3200 cusecs or widening the canal by five feet.

The LLC canal which is 250 km long from Hospet to AP border flows to a distance of 135 km exclusively in Karnataka and thereafter in Karnataka and AP until 250 km and to a distance of 180 km exclusively in AP.

The canal could be easily bypassed from 72 km to 185 km by avoiding a hump-like curve in the canal.

The distance of the bypass would be not more than 18 km in Karnataka area, they said. The farmers and Project Committee representatives urged the government to take up the outstanding issues of both canals at one go rather than attempting a piecemeal approach.

Cotton, paddy farmers suffer loss

Incessant rain since Tuesday morning across the district has damaged cotton and paddy crops leaving the farmers miserable. They were in a fix as ready-to-pick cotton was getting discoloured and there would not be many buyers for such cotton. The farmers who have cultivated paddy are no less worried as their produce has been damaged due to copious rains.

Cultivation in 6.5 lakh acres likely in rabi



Farmers eager to make up for losses suffered in kharif

Bright prospects:Paddy cultivation picks up for rabi season in parts of Nellore district.—Photo: K. Ravikumar

After plenty of rains and favourable weather, the expectations are that the rabi crops will be sown in a total area of nearly 6.5 lakh acres in the Nellore district during this season.

Paddy remains the main crop during the rabi season, which usually witnesses

sowings and transplantations in winter. The influence of depression and north-east monsoon have helped in bringing good rains in all parts of the district.

The favourable turn in weather has raised expectations among the farmers associations, as they pin hopes on covering more area than last year. The farmers are also eager to make up for the losses they have suffered on account of poor acreage during the kharif season.

Apart from the paddy, the other crops that are mostly grown in Nellore district are black gram, red gram, sunflower and maize. For various reasons, the farmers are not willing to go for black gram in a big way this year. One of the reasons is that this crop has given poor yields last season. The irrigation sources for the rabi season are showing lot of promise for the farmers. The Somasila reservoir has over 48 tmc water and the Kandaleru reservoir is likely to get supply in due course. Under these two reservoirs, there are nearly 5.1 lakh acres of cultivation in the district.

The district administration has cleared release of Somasila water to cover 4.16 lakh acres ayacut from November first week. A decision to this effect has been taken at the recent irrigation advisory board meeting held at the Collectorate recently.

As the farmers are likely to cultivate over 6.5 lakh acres, the officials have estimated that this will require more than 50 tmc water. With regard to the Kandaleru reservoir, it has been decided that no water will be released to lands under its ayacut as only 18 tmc water is available as of now in this reservoir. However, this is hope that sufficient water will be available from Somasila, which is expected to greater inflows in the next three months.

Incessant rains damage crops

Incessant rains in various parts of Karimnagar district since Tuesday evening has caused extensive damage to the farming community. While paddy, cotton and maize, which were ready for harvesting, were damaged extensively, the crops brought to the market yard by farmers met the same fate. Meanwhile, several low-lying areas were inundated in the town.

Vidarbha farmer gets Rs.80 for Rs.15,000 loss!



A farmer Wardha district in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, who suffered losses of around Rs.15,000 during the last monsoon floods, was aghast to receive a compensation amount of Rs.80. He is not the only one, according to NGO Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS) chief Kishore Tiwari, active among the farming communities in eastern Maharashtra.

“Thousands of cheques bearing compensation amounts like Rs.80, Rs.100, Rs.150 are lying in various

tehsildar offices, but the farmers are refusing to collect them,” Tiwari said here Wednesday. The Wardha farmer, Sotba G.Bavne, had submitted claims worth around Rs.15,000 for the losses in the floods and spent an additional Rs.95 in various official fees. “The most shocking part is that some officials came to survey his premises, they had tea and snacks in his home and even took Rs.100 promising to expedite his claims. VJAS demands that these officials be suspended and booked,” Tiwari told IANS.

CM’s aid package

The meagre compensation amounts are being doled out though Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan had announced a total aid package of Rs.2,000 crore for the severely flood-hit regions of eastern Maharashtra during the monsoon fury this year.

Later, Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar made an intensive tour of the region and indicated a massive special central aid, which has not yet been announced, Tiwari added. “In the meantime, the farmers are being told to collect these cheques with pittance amount. For opening a savings bank account to deposit them, they are required to shell out a minimum Rs.500. How can the poor farmer afford?” he said.

Call to rely on traditional farming



S. Sreekanth, director, Development through Education, addressing Adivasi farmers in Hunsur.

S. Sreekanth, director, Development through Education (DEED), a tribal welfare organisation in Hunsur, has called upon the Adivasis to rely on

traditional agricultural practices to produce toxin-free food crops.

He was inaugurating a training programme for progressive Adivasi agriculturists in Hunsur, according to information received here on Tuesday.

Adivasis, who made forests their homes for centuries, were in a way self-reliant since they did not depend on markets for seeds, manure, pesticides or other inputs, Mr. Sreekanth said. The Adivasi farmers, at the end of the programme, resolved to use cow dung, urea made of cow urine and prepare seeds by themselves to produce toxin-free food in the future.

Adivasi farmers Puttaiah from Kempamma Hemmige Hadi in Neralekuppe village, Puttaiah from Veeranahosalli, Prakash from Halladkoppalu hadi and Udesha from Aiyyanakere hadi were felicitated by the DEED.

Assistant Director of Agriculture K.P. Honne Gowda said growing and consumption of organic food by using locally available manure and seeds would serve many purposes, including health.

Sheep, goat and cattle rearing could supplement the efforts of farmers, he said. Urine could be collected from the cattle and mixed with water and used as an agent to grow vegetables, Mr. Gowda said.

He underscored the importance of consuming maize as a healthy food supplement, which could be used to make different varieties of food items.

Over 50 selected Adivasi farmers from more than 15 hadis exchanged views on agriculture by dividing themselves into groups.

Adivasi leaders P.K. Ramu, Shivanna, Sannaiah, Mariyaiah, Shankaraiah, Kempamma, and DEED volunteers Lalita Karumbaiah, Chandramma and Devaki were present.

Rains cause heavy damage to crops in Srikakulam district

Mahendratanaya, Nagavali, Vamsadhara receiving huge inflows



Rain havoc: A road inundated after heavy rainfall in Srikakulam on Wednesday. —Photo: Basheer

Natural calamities continued to haunt Srikakulam district where crops got damaged heavily with unabated rains for the last few days. Paddy and maize in around 25,000 acres were damaged with the fresh rains on Wednesday with the impact of North-East monsoon.

Apart from crop damage, several houses collapsed in places such as G. Sigadam, Itchapuram. Life was thrown out of gear in many mandals including Kanchili, Kaviti, Palasa, Itchapuram, Sompeta. Rain water entered houses in Sompeta and Kanchili areas, causing many troubles to residents. Furniture got damaged in several offices including MPDOs office in Sompeta.

Srikakulam Collector Saurabh Gaur directed the special officers to stay at their respective mandals and monitor the flood situation. Irrigation officials were asked not to move from headquarters as floods posed a major threat to the district. Mahendranaya, Nagavali, Vamsadhara are receiving huge inflows with the downpour in catchments. The situation is likely to be crucial from Thursday with the heavy inflows into Mahendranaya river. Floods will have impact on Sompeta town, officials feared.

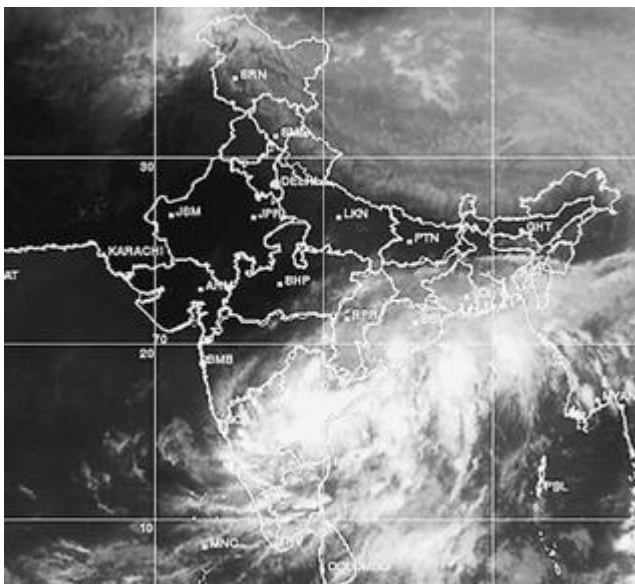
Fisheries Department was asked to arrange boats to evacuate people to safer places in Mandasa mandal. Kaviti areas were badly affected with the heavy downpour of 178.2. mm. Mandasa received 171.4 mm and Kanchili got 171.2 mm rainfall till Wednesday morning.

Control room

A control room (phone numbers:1800 425 6625, 08942-240557) was set up in the Collectorate to help victims to register their grievances. The officials said relief measures were being taken up immediately with the feedback received at the control room.

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- *Life thrown out of gear in many mandals, several houses collapse in G. Sigadam, Itchapuram*
 - *Fisheries officials asked to arrange boats to evacuate people to safer places in Mandasa mandal*
-

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on October 23.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Anantapur	27	22	7	38
Arogyavaram	25	19	15	149
Bapatla	25	23	71	320
Calingapatnam	27	24	114	351
Gannavaram	26	24	28	204
Hanamkonda	33	21	0	64
Hyderabad AP	28	22	9	136
Kakinada	26	25	180	256

Khammam	31	23	7	39
Kavali	25	23	92	314
Kurnool	28	23	4	22
Mahabubnagar	26	22	15	90
Machilipatnam	26	23	47	206
Nandyal	28	23	43	67
Narasapur	26	24	99	396
Nellore	27	24	56	229
Nizamabad	30	23	0	90
Ongole	25	23	27	149
Ramagundam	31	23	0	108
Tirupathi AP	29	23	89	157
Tuni	28	24	100	193
Vizag AP	28	24	92	181
Vizag	27	23	89	230

KARNATAKA

Agumbe	29	17	21	475
Bengaluru AP	24	19	3	51
Bengaluru	24	20	1	40
Belgaum AP	29	20	10	41
Bellary	26	21	20	40
Bijapur	31	21	51	89
Chitradurga	25	19	11	27
Chickmagalur	28	19	0	22
Chintamani	25	19	7	30
Gadag	28	21	11	43
Gulbarga	31	23	6	30
Hassan	28	19	2	78
Honavar	33	24	0	137
Karwar	34	25	tr	136
Madikeri	25	18	1	149
Mangalore AP	31	22	8	199
Mysore	28	21	0	101
Mandya	27	20	3	93
Panambur	33	24	2	176
Raichur	30	22	2	39
Shirali	32	24	tr	376

KERALA

Alappuzha	30	24	tr	122
Kannur	31	25	0	226
Kochi AP	31	23	43	299
Kottayam	31	23	7	344
Kozhikode	32	25	tr	152
Punalur	31	23	13	392
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	30	25	8	115
Thiruvanantha				
-puram City	31	25	1	205
Vellanikkara	29	23	23	264

TAMIL NADU

Adiramapattinam	33	26	tr	49
Chennai	29	25	3	141
Chennai AP	29	24	9	199
Coimbatore AP	30	23	1	78
Coonoor	21	15	2	120
Cuddalore	32	25	tr	72
Dharmapuri	27	19	0	111
Kanyakumari	31	25	1	26
Karaikal	32	25	11	96
Kodaikanal	15	12	2	115
Madurai AP	34	25	0	182
Nagapattinam	33	25	1	93
Palayamkottai	35	25	0	86
Pamban	33	28	0	122
Parangipettai	31	25	5	144
Puducherry	31	25	0	57
Salem	31	22	2	99
Thanjavur	32	26	0	54
Tiruchi AP	32	24	0	114
Tirupattur	28	19	6	103
Tiruttani	31	24	0	163
Tondi	31	26	0	98
Tuticorin	36	26	0	23
Ooty	16	12	7	155
Valparai	23	17	0	202
Vellore	29	24	1	65
LAKSHADWEEP				
Amini Divi	30	27	0	75
Minicoy	32	26	0	42
OTHER STATIONS				
Kolkata (Alipore)	28	24	6	339
Mumbai	35	25	0	66
New Delhi	34	18	0	73

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall in mm since October 01, 2013.

WIDESPREAD RAIN IN COASTAL A.P.

CHENNAI: Northeast monsoon has been vigorous over Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra Pradesh and active over Telangana, Interior Karnataka and Kerala. Rainfall occurred at most places over Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra Pradesh, at many places over Telangana, Kerala and interior Karnataka and at a few places over north Tamil Nadu and coastal Karnataka. Isolated rainfall occurred over south Tamil Nadu. Mainly dry weather prevailed over Lakshadweep. Palakkad reported an exceptionally heavy rainfall of 30 Centimetres. The other chief amounts of rainfall recorded in centimetres are:

Tamil Nadu: Chettikulam (Perambalur Dist) 5, Tiruvannamalai (Tiruvannamalai Dist) 4.

Kerala: Enamackel (Thrissur district) 9.

Andhra Pradesh: Mandasa (dist Srikakulam) 17, Palasa, Sompeta and Itchapuram (all dist Srikakulam) 15 each.

Karnataka: Bantwal (Dakshina Kannada dt) 10, Kurugodu (Bellary dt), YN Hoskote (Tumkur dt) 8 each.

Forecast(valid till Friday morning): Rain would occur at most places over coastal Andhra Pradesh, Rayalaseema and interior Karnataka, at many places over Telangana, Kerala and coastal Karnataka and at a few places over north Tamil Nadu and Puducherry. Isolated rain may occur over south Tamil Nadu and over Lakshadweep.



Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0

Humidity: 66

Wind: normal

Thursday, Oct 24

Max Min

28° | 24°

Sunrise: 06:00

Sunset: 05:46

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Oct 25

Max Min

31° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday
Oct 26



29° | 26°

Overcast

Sunday
Oct 27



29° | 26°

Overcast

Monday
Oct 28



28° | 26°

Overcast

Tuesday
Oct 29



31° | 27°

Overcast

Wednesday
Oct 30



28° | 26°

Overcast

Onion prices may remain high for 2-3 weeks: Pawar

The UPA government struggled to tame high onions prices, which have quadrupled from year ago to `90-`100 a kg, as farm minister Sharad Pawar on Wednesday asked all chief ministers to invoke the Essential Commodities Act, an anti-hoarding legislation that allows the state to control the sale and supply of certain food and

non-food items, while the commerce ministry eased rules to quicken imports.

Pawar in Bangalore said fresh onions were unlikely to reach markets immediately and the price spiral could last up to three weeks. "We have to import as soon as possible. Fortunately, there is ample onion available in China and Egypt and other neighbouring countries," Pawar said. A key interministerial meet is slated for Thursday.

Exhorting traders in Delhi not to make a profit from selling onions, Delhi chief minister Sheila Dikshit said she would meet Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar and food minister KV Thomas on Thursday to seek their intervention in bringing down price of the bulb.

Heavy rains, a cyclone that flooded key interstate highways and a longer-than-normal monsoon have slowed harvesting of India's main summer onion crop and held up delivery of stored produce, which usually takes care of demand at this time of the year when stocks bottom out.

Pawar and commerce minister Anand Sharma have blamed hoarders for worsening the shortage, saying states would have to use powers under the emergency law to get tough on blackmarketeers. On Wednesday, very little onion, a staple of most India meals, poured into Lasalgaon, Asia's biggest wholesale market for the bulb, which sets price benchmarks around the country.

Nafed, the government's main food-trading arm, has been asked to scour the international markets. On Wednesday, NAFED issued tenders for import of onions from Pakistan, Iran, China and Egypt.

Food inflation, driven by onions, rose 18% in September from a year ago, spooking household budgets. To speed imports, the government has waived off a key crop-hygiene rule until November 30. Importers would not be penalized if they imported non-fumigated onion stocks, but they would have to sterilise the stocks once they land.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

East Asian giants must work together on climate change: ADB

TOKYO: The [Asian Development Bank](#) on Wednesday called on China and Japan to band together in fighting the disastrous effects of climate change, despite their diplomatic hostilities.

The Manila-based [ADB](#) urged the Asian giants, along with neighbours South Korea and Mongolia, to set up a climate research network and an emissions trading scheme.

A carbon trading market could see the countries hit their greenhouse gas emission targets at a "significantly lower cost than acting alone", it said in a report.

"How East Asia addresses the impact of [climate change](#) has significant consequences across regional and global boundaries," Stephen Groff, vice president of the ADB, said in a video message broadcast in Tokyo after the release of its "Economics of Climate Change in East Asia" report.

"As an export-oriented industrial powerhouse, the East Asia region accounts for 30 percent of the world's total energy-related greenhouse gas emissions. Mitigating effects of climate change is crucial and all the issues must include" this region, Groff said.

He added that "acting now is essential because any delay will only mean a higher cost in the future".

The ADB called for a total annual combined investment by the four countries of about \$37 billion in climate-proofing infrastructure and agriculture and making coastal regions less vulnerable, to mitigate the economic losses from natural disasters.

Fighting the effects of climate change-related natural disasters, including damage to agricultural production, has cost the region \$340 billion over the past four decades, it said.

Diplomatic relations between Tokyo and Beijing plunged last year in the wake of a dispute over an East China Sea island chain, while Japan is also embroiled in a separate territorial dispute with Seoul.

But the ADB report said regional cooperation was a crucial and cost-effective way of tackling a shared problem.

More than 60 percent of the proposed combined annual investment by the four nations should be used to strengthen disaster protections for houses and roads as well as flood defences, it said.

Strengthening sea dikes as well as pouring money into ports, irrigation and crop-yield research were among the report's other proposed measures.

Potato prices up across Delhi despite dip in bulk rates

NEW DELHI: After onion, potato prices have started increasing in Delhi and other cities. Wholesale prices are hovering around Rs 18 per kg at the mandis while retail prices are between Rs 25 and Rs 30 per kg in the capital. Wholesale prices have increased by Rs 2-8 per kg in other cities including Mumbai and Chennai.

Though officials in the food and agriculture ministries said the price rise was not very unusual, they were stumped by the increase despite wholesale prices falling by Rs 62 per quintal. "There are some forces which are trying to exploit the mood in the market, which needs to be checked," said an official.

Overall production this year fell by around 4.7 million tonnes against 2012. "This year's stock is now being supplied to most markets across the country. Almost 70% of the 40 million tonnes of potato produced this year was stored. Usually, the price increases by Re 1 and Rs 1.5 per kg per month on account of storage expenses. So, prices increase substantially by October and November," the official said.

A National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation official said they would compile data on daily arrival and price of potato in major markets since there were indications of prices increasing across cities.

The data generated from government's price monitoring cell shows that the maxim increase in wholesale price was reported from [Dehradun](#) where the rise was about Rs 9 per kg between October 10 and October 23. Wholesale price increased by Rs 8 in Dharwad, Rs 5 in Chennai, Rs 6 in Chandigarh and Rs 3 in Mumbai.

Crop loss or hoarding? Peeling onion crisis not easy

NEW DELHI: It's past the time when onion prices could bring tears to your eyes. Now there is just anger and frustration. In three months, the retail price of onion has gone up by 150% — from Rs 40 per kg to Rs 100 per kg — in parts of the city. The government has been claiming since September that prices will fall, first by [the middle](#) of the month, then by the middle of October and now by next week.

To make matters worse, the government and traders cannot see eye to eye on the reasons for this hike or when prices will start falling. While traders are being blamed for hoarding and creating an artificial shortage, the government is being accused of failing to act in time and keep prices down when it became evident that heavy showers across the country had ruined [the onion](#) crop.

Sources say Delhi is facing an onion shortfall of roughly 30-40%. At Azadpur, the average arrival has been around 6,000 quintals in the past week, ranging from 4,000 quintals to 11,000 quintals. The city is being supplied onions largely from Karnataka and Maharashtra and a few tonnes are coming from Indore and Alwar. Supply from [Madhya Pradesh](#) and Rajasthan will pick up only in the coming week.

“The prices have stabilized now but we expect any sort of fall only after Diwali. Even then, because only 60% of the normal produce from Alwar is expected, there will be no substantial change in prices. The supply from Rajasthan will peak in the first week of December and by January fresh produce from Gujarat and Chakan in Maharashtra will start arriving. That is when prices will really come down. Till then, the wholesale price will be around Rs 35-40 per kg. We even imported cheaper onion from China but its quality was not up to mark,” said Surendra Sawhney, proprietor, Gujarat Onion Co.

The best quality onion, sourced from Maharashtra, sold for a maximum of Rs 65 per kg in the wholesale market on Wednesday. Sources said that the normal price for this variety is usually around Rs 20 per kg. However, barely a few kilometres away from Azadpur Mandi, its cost went up by Rs 20-40. In Model Town, the Maharashtra onion is being sold for Rs 80 per kg while in neighbouring Kingsway Camp, the price has gone up to Rs 90 per kg.

“There was an initial shortage because production went down by 8% this year compared to last year. Despite that, India kept exporting to other countries though there were enough indications pointing to a shortfall. Then the extended monsoon and heavy rain across the country made matters worse. Crop got spoilt in several states,” said an Azadpur Mandi trader.

Government officials on the other hand indicate that large-scale hoarding is taking place in Delhi. Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee chairman Rajender Sharma said that production in 2013 was in fact more than that in 2012 and Azadpur Mandi was getting a sufficient onion supply. “There is so much stock right now that traders are unable to sell all of it in one day. I refuse to believe that the retail rate is more than Rs 80 per kg anywhere in the city. Some produce was affected in the rain but not sufficiently to affect supply. Now that the Alwar crop has started arriving in the mandi, we are expecting rates to fall from the coming

Monday,” he said.

Dr Bijender Singh, chairman of NAFED, blamed the current shortage partly on cyclone Phailin and partly on the traders. “The shortage occurred when Cyclone Phailin held up supply from states like Karnataka and Maharashtra for about five days. Secondly, Delhi traders have purchased [stocks](#) from Rajasthan at a fixed price. But this kind of trade is not sustainable. We are expecting a drop in prices in another three-four days,” he said.

Onion prices drop in Tamil Nadu , but northern states weep

CHENNAI: Though the price of onions in the northern states has hit 100/kg, prices of the staple remained at a steady 55/kg to 60/kg in retail stores in [Tamil Nadu](#) on Tuesday and Wednesday.

A proactive stance by the state government and the CID’s food cell, which is monitoring delivery trucks, and traders associations cooperating with the authorities have helped keep the price of onions stable and at almost half the rate in Delhi.

Agricultural cooperative stores marked down the price of the vegetable even further, with Kamadhenu Cooperative Supermarket in Teynampet charging 45/kg.

Speaking to TOI, Koyambedu Vegetable Market Association advisor V R Soundararajan hinted at the possibility that traders in the northern states could be hoarding onions.

“Traders in Tamil Nadu have not hoarded onions,” he said. “Even when onions were selling at 80/kg and 90/ in other parts of the country, we managed to keep the price at 65/kg.”

He said Tamil Nadu had Karnataka’s farmers to thank for their produce, which traders in the state source overnight. Transporting onions to New Delhi and other parts of the country takes a couple of days, is under less scrutiny for diversion, and is more expensive — with traders passing on the cost to customers.

District supply officers of the state civil supplies corporation said they are keeping tabs on traders during routine checks. “This has helped check hoarding of onions,” an official said.

Soundararajan said the prices had spiralled towards the latter half of the year because of hoarding and due to patchy rainfall in some places and heavy showers ruining crops in other onions growing regions. “We are hopeful that the prices will revert to normal once the winter harvest arrives in the market,” he said.

In a bind with Delhi going to the polls on December 4, the Centre has asked states to crack down on hoarding of the commodity. The Union ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution asked states to conduct inspections and track transactions at local wholesale markets, an official said.

To answer his cyber critics, Agriculture minister Sharad Pawar takes to blogging



"With almost 260 million tonnes of record foodgrain production in 2011-12, Indian farmers have done us proud", says Sharad Pawar. (PTI)

NCP president Sharad Pawar has turned blogger and in his maiden post sought to reply critics questioning his contribution as the agriculture minister.

"What has Mr Sharad Pawar done in the field of agriculture?" or "what is Mr Sharad Pawar's contribution to India's agricultural growth?" Such verbal missiles are often targeted at me. Good questions. Let's address them," the veteran leader said.

"Agriculture is an immensely complex proposition in a country known for its diversity," he said, adding that abundant diversity in soil and weather condition lead to variations in productivity from one region to another.

"Notwithstanding good production, the escalating import bills of pulses and edible oil has been a matter of concern. The tangle can be resolved by optimizing the resources by way of better input supply, adoption of technology, extension and R&D, vigorous marketing and remunerative prices," he said.

"I also believe that the scientific community should be given greater autonomy. This would enable scientists to make farming a viable proposition," the minister said.

"When UPA-1 assumed office, I volunteered to take charge of the agriculture portfolio as I had a blueprint in my mind to enhance the food yield in the country. The country's food grain production stood in the range of 200 million tonnes, barely sufficient to meet the domestic requirement," he said.

NCP's revamped website, on which the blog has been posted, was launched this evening by Union Minister Praful Patel, who said the party had decided to make use of social media to reach out to people.

"With almost 260 million tonnes of record food grain production in 2011-12, Indian farmers have done us proud. When I took over as minister for agriculture, the food grain production barely touched 200 million tonnes with rice production stagnating at 90 million tonnes and wheat at 70 million tonnes," Pawar said.

Pawar said he was proud to note that food grain production has crossed 250 million.

"Today, I am proud to state that our tally of food grain production has touched the 250 million-plus tonnes mark with rice pegged at 100 million-plus tonnes and wheat at 90 million-plus tonnes.

"The cotton yield has doubled to 35 million bales and pulses are a bit above 18 million tonnes. The milk production has jacked up from 90 million tonnes (when I assumed charge of the ministry) to 130 million tonnes.

"Today, India is the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables. I am of the firm view that we could achieve this because of the tremendous efforts of our farmers, a whopping 82 per cent of who are small and marginal farmers with less than two hectares of land holding," said the maratha strongman whose political career spans over five decades.

Add to this, the pro-farmer policies of the UPA government and support from the state governments.

"I am particularly happy that my decision to launch 'Bringing Green Revolution to Eastern India' (BGREI), promptly backed by the then finance minister Pranab Mukherjee, has been a great success. Today, more than 50 per cent of the rice production is from BGREI states," Pawar said.

"While addressing Parliament, the President appreciated our efforts, saying that there are reasons to cheer on the agriculture front," he said.

Onion at Rs 90/kg; Pawar says rates to stay high for 2-3 weeks

Onion prices continued to hover at record highs of Rs 90 per kg for the third day today with no sight of respite as Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said rates will remain high for two-three more weeks.

Refusing to ban export of onion, the Centre asked state governments to invoke Essential Commodities Act to crackdown on hoarders.

It however initiated the process of importing onion from Pakistan, Iran, Egypt and China to cool rates.

"next two to three weeks will be tough and ultimately we have to find a solution," Pawar said in Bangalore replying to a query on onion prices that have reached an all-time high.

Asked whether he meant that the prices would come down in the next two to three weeks, he said: "No, no. I am not an astrologer. But I know something about crops. On my own assessment, this situation will continue for the next two to three weeks."

Pawar asked the Chief Ministers of all states to invoke the Essential Commodities Act against hoarders. The Minister also said that he would inform Food Minister K V Thomas that the co-operative NAFED is ready to import some quantity of the bulb.

Stating that extensive rainfall has hit supply, Pawar said: "We have to import as early as possible. I have instructed the Managing Director of NAFED (that) if there is a request from any state, we should be ready."

"Fortunately, there is ample onion (stock) available in China, Egypt and neighboring countries and (I) have collected figures and prices yesterday. The prices in these countries are cheaper compared to India," Pawar added.

Meanwhile, NAFED today floated tender for import of the edible bulb from Pakistan, Iran, China and Egypt. It has also relaxed the conditions for imports to augment domestic supply. The Centre has also called a meeting of agriculture secretaries of five major onion producing states- Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Karnataka - on October 25 to review the production and marketing of the crop.

DECCAN Chronicle

DC special: Onion prices, the national tear-jerker



A wholesaler sorting onions in Kolkata on Wednesday - PTI

With onion prices going through the roof and showing no signs of falling, consumers are beginning to wonder if there is more to the situation than meets the eye, particularly as

the government's claims of crop loss and shortage in supply don't bear out on close scrutiny. DC investigates

Bengaluru: Being a daily necessity and an essential part of Indian cooking, its inevitable that housewives should be reduced to real tears when the price of onion heads north, burning a hole in their domestic budgets.

While the Union government has a ready answer for the steep price rise, blaming it on crop loss and delayed arrival of onions in the market, the ground reality in the state is very different and throws up more questions about what is really responsible for the shooting price of a vegetable that is otherwise so easy on the pockets.

Visit the two main onion markets of the state in Bengaluru and Hubli and you see there is no shortage in supply of onions despite claims to the contrary. In fact, compared to the previous year, the Bengaluru market has this year received around one lakh tonnes more of onion between September 15 and October 15. While the Bengaluru market had received only 75,952 tonnes of onion in the corresponding period last year, this year it has received 1.74 lakh tonnes. The Dharwad APMC too has received 20,000 tonnes more onion in the same period.

APMC officials and traders tell you there is no supply problem despite the high rainfall in many onion growing regions of the state. With the price of onion being high from September, farmers have been hurrying to sell their stock to take advantage of it, according to them.

"I have a few regular suppliers from Chitradurga district. Compared to previous years, farmers in the district got a bumper onion crop this year, but within a few days of harvesting there was virtually no stock left with them as they hurried to sell it to take advantage of the high price."

"While the city's markets received only 75,952 tonnes of onion in the corresponding period last year, this year it has received 1.74 lakh tonnes. Although in the past they supplied us till November end, all their stock has already been exhausted this year," said a trader at the Yeshwantpur APMC, arguing the hike in price could not be blamed on lack of supply.

Traders see transportation cost as the villain. One onion merchant, Raghuram Pai, says the transportation cost has virtually doubled due to hike in diesel and toll rates. "While the average quality onion is sold for Rs 50 to Rs 55 in Bengaluru's local markets, it is sold for Rs 80 in New Delhi due to the transport cost involved," he says.

According to an APMC officer in Hubli, the other reason is hoarding. Explaining that farmers supply both durable and non durable varieties of onions, he says some traders hoard the durable variety for release at the "right time" which in their calendar means when they can make the most money from it. Generally onion is routed through the APMC. So if the government monitors who is buying it in bulk then hoarding can be prevented easily," he maintains.

Next: Onions to be cultivated in rabi season

Onions to be cultivated in rabi season

Bengaluru: Onion prices are unlikely to fall anytime soon as Karnataka farmers are choosing to sell their produce to northern states with Maharashtra's production suffering on account of heavy rain, according to horticulture secretary M.K. Shankarlinge Gowda.

Speaking to reporters here on Wednesday, he however assured the state was planning to grow some newer varieties of onions in the rabi season to ensure supply in the lean period and bring down the prices.

Karnataka, he said, would discuss the possibility of increasing the expanse of land under onion cultivation and the varieties of onions that could be grown during the rabi season during a video-conference that the Union cabinet secretary plans to hold with southern states on Friday.

“While Karnataka grows onions only in the late kharif season, Maharashtra grows them both in the kharif and rabi seasons. And the varieties it produces can be stored for longer unlike those grown in the state, which have high moisture content and a shorter shelf-life,” Gowda explained, adding that with Maharashtra stocks having been affected this year, Karnataka farmers were selling their produce outside the state for a better price.

“This may have led to shortage in the local markets. As there are no restrictions on the inter-state movement of such produce, there is little we can do. However we plan to have a second crop in the rabi season in consultation with the Centre,” he said.

Meanwhile, consumers in Karnataka will have to wait until locally grown onions from Bagalkot, Dharwad, Challakere, Hiriyur and Chitradurga flood the markets for their price to fall, say experts.

Middleman’s gain, farmer’s loss

With the price of onions touching Rs 70 a kg in the market, you would expect the farmers to be making all the money, but if they are to be believed they are getting just half the amount that people pay for it.

Farmers present at the wholesale market claimed they were getting between Rs 35 and Rs 45 for good quality onions. “In fact for average quality onions our price starts from Rs 15 a kg. But the same onion is sold for Rs 45 to Rs 50 in retail markets. At the end of the day farmers make very little as always,” said a grower from Kolar, Jagath Naidu.

But ask a vendor from Hubli, Mohammed Samshuddin, and he says the farmers are making a good profit this year. “Farmers usually want to make a big profit once in two or three years. As the last two years were bad, they are making up for it this year,” he claimed.

An officer of the horticulture department feels the best way to regulate the price of onion is to have a dedicated monitoring agency overseeing it.

“Most of the reasons attributed for the price rise are not true. If farmers are getting only Rs 35 a kg, how can it be sold for Rs 70 by the traders? The government needs to come out with strict guidelines on profit margins,” he maintained.

Pointing out that onions can be preserved for a few weeks, he explains that even those who hoard tonnes of onion for just a week can sell it for double the price in today’s market.

Forest in the living room!



*Dr Shanmugasundaran at the training programme organised by the TNAU on Wednesday.
(Express photo/P Ravi Kumar)*

Many at a training programme on ‘Bonsai Making’ had never grown vegetables at home. But that did not come in the way of their enthusiasm for the charm of having one’s own private little forest in the living room, with the greenery in the city shrinking day by day.

In fact, long after the session started, the training hall was packed and participants could still be seen trickling in. “Bonsai making is an art for which one must take inspiration from nature,” said Dr K A Shanmugasundaran, assistant professor at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Information and Training Centre, at the training programme organised by the TNAU on Wednesday. “What one needs to do is to go and explore the nature and make a Bonsai by putting together the best of what we find,” he said.

The training programme emphasised on the need to get the right plant and nurture it properly. “Nurturing a bonsai is in many ways like nurturing any other plant. What one needs is an experience in growing plants, the right seeds, the right nutrients and the right upkeep,” he said.

The best way to get the plants is either from a nearby garden or a wild area as it not only saves money, but also helps one train better in selecting the plants. This can be little plants growing on the rocks or a little branch that seems to have the potential of growing into a tree, which can be obtained through air layering or by using seeds.

“There are several organisations in the city for Bonsai culturing that look at obtaining the plants by organising walks and other events. This is by and far the best way to obtain the plants,” said Dr Shanmugham.

Once, the plant is obtained, it can be nurtured in a way that suits one’s imagination. The plant needs to be regularly pruned and nipped to cut down on vertical growth and nutrients need to be regulated in the pot in which it is grown. The plant can be shaped according to your preference either by growing it as an ordinary vertical plant, slating, cascade, semi-cascade,

etc., by adjusting the growth of the trunk. It can also be done by adjusting the sunlight that it receives or by controlling its growth by tying to fix it with flexible copper wires or strings.

Characteristics to choose the plant for Bonsai culture:

Small Leaves

Short internodes

Attractive bark or roots

Best time to Collect:

During March and April

Items to keep handy while collecting:

A small collapsible shovel, polyethylene sheeting and string for wrapping root balls, sphagnum moss for packing around root ball, a container of water for wetting leaves and root ball, and a small crowbar for getting roots out of rocks.

Components for the pot for the Bonsai plant: Sand, Gravel of fine granite pebbles, compost and ordinary soil in equal proportions in a shallow container to minimise nutrients.

Recommended Plants for beginners (in Chennai): Pomegranate, Lime, Ficus species, Guava, Sapota, Bougainvillea etc.

Tips for pruning

Make all Cuts Above a bud, a side branch or a main fork of the tree. Remove all buds, except those on the outside of the trunk.

Avoid cutting back so far that you weaken the main branches.

After deciding the form of the Bonsai, remove all crossed branches until the tree takes on the form of your choice.



NO RESPITE FROM RISING ONION PRICES IN NEAR FUTURE: PAWAR

There will be no respite from the skyrocketing onion prices for some more weeks, said Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar.



Pawar told the media in Bangalore on Wednesday on the sidelines of the Eighth National Conference on Krishi Vigyan Kendras 2013 that onion prices will remain high for at least two to three weeks. He said, “I am not an astrologer. But I know something about crops. On my own assessment, this situation will continue for the next two to three weeks. Next two to three weeks will be tough

and ultimately we have to find a solution. “

Pawar also asked the State Governments to invoke Essential Commodities Act against hoarders and arrest them. He also ruled out traders exporting onions to other countries. “Nobody is exporting because in other countries price of onions is somewhere near 500 dollars and in India, it is 900 dollars. So in such a situation there is no export,” he said. Pawar said he would inform Food Minister KV Thomas that the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd is ready to import some quantity of onions.

Business Standard

Rising input costs, lower consumption hits poultry industry

Hatcheries are losing average Rs 8 per kg as the selling price is lower than the cost of production

Rising input costs and lower consumption owing to 'vegetarian months' has hit the [poultry](#) industry in the recent months. The industry, which had seen peak selling prices of up to Rs 80 per kg between April and June this year as the industry had resorted to production holidays, is once again witnessing losses due to decline in the prices in the last quarter.

The farm gate prices of poultry meat have come down to Rs 55 per kg, a decline of 31% compared to Rs 75-80 per kg earlier this year. The hatchers are losing an average Rs 8 per kg as the production cost hovers around Rs 63 per kg due to rising inputs costs.

"The prices of key poultry feed inputs like maize, soya extracts, bajra and imported amino acids and vitamins have increased in the range of 25-30%. In addition, the consumption has dropped as people do not consume during the months from Shravana to Karthik (July to November)," said MCR Shetty, President, Karnataka Poultry Farmers & Breeders Association (KPFBA).

Last year, operational costs went up significantly following a 25% rise in the price of maize and more than doubling of soymeal prices, from Rs 22 a kg before June 2012 to Rs 45 a kg in August 2012.

As a result of controlled production of meat and 'hatching holidays' initiated by key integrators late last year, the price of poultry meat appreciated by as much as 65% and even doubled in certain regions during the first four months of 2013.

"Last year, poultry prices were very low and we have seen input costs going up significantly, in the range of 50% and above. As there was drought in Karnataka the productivity of maize was very low in the states and as a result maize prices increased alarmingly. Other factors like depreciation of rupee hit us very hard as we have to import amino acids and some vaccines, which became costly," Shetty added.

The poultry meat sector grew 17.2% to 3.4 million tonne (mt) in 2012, compared to 2.9 mt in 2011. Domestic poultry meat production (broiler - carcass weight) was less than a million tonne in 2000. Per capita yearly consumption has increased from 0.8 kg to 2.8 kg during the last decade, ICRA said in a report earlier this year.

The Indian poultry industry has been growing at around 8-10% annually over the last decade, with broiler meat volumes growing at more than 10%.

In 2012, the prices of poultry meat had crashed to as low as Rs 40 a kg, mainly due to volume growth.

The second half of 2012 was a tough year for the industry due to an increase in production costs, with feed ingredients touching record highs and realizations suffering on back of oversupply in industry. However, the efforts of key integrators in poultry industry to control supply through measures like 'hatching holidays' initiated towards fag end of 2012, resulted in improved realisations in the first half of 2013.

“We can expect similar situation to return only from the middle of December when the consumption picks up,” Shetty added.

Govt cancels wheat export tender



Floor price fixed by EGoM far more than highest price offer amid global oversupply

In a setback for the [Food Corporation](#) of India (FCI), the government has cancelled the hitherto sole [wheat](#) export tender for the current financial year, due to low price offers from importers.

The tender was floated jointly by three state-owned trading companies – MMTTC, PEC and STC. It kept the floor price at \$300 a tonne, as decided by an Empowered Group of Ministers (EGoM) in July. The tender was floated in the first week of September and opened early this month. Government-owned FCI was to supply the wheat scheduled to be exported through these trading companies.

According to a senior FCI official, the highest price bid was \$269 a tonne, 10 per cent lower than the floor price.

“FCI was expecting a premium over the current price in the global market. On receipt of the low price bids, we approached the ministry (food and [consumer affairs](#)) for a decision. The ministry has decided to cancel the tender,” said the official.

In the benchmark [Chicago Board](#) of Trade, wheat is quoted at \$257 a tonne, slightly higher than the \$233 a tonne at the time of floating the tender last month. The floor price of \$300 decided by the EGoM came with an okay for wheat export of two million tonnes for this

financial year, after successful shipment of 4.5 mt in 2012-13. The floor price was decided based on the average realisation of last year.

This year, though, is different. Wheat prices are ebbing due to a global surplus. The EGoM is to meet next week and the ministry has decided to recommend a reduction in the floor price. If the panel approves, a new tender will be floated next month, with a lower floor price. “We hope to then get a good response,” said the official.

FCI got a hefty \$40 a tonne premium last year. Against the prevailing \$267 a tonne globally, the ‘India’ brand of wheat got an average of \$305 a tonne. Encouraged, the EGOM fixed its higher floor price for export this year.

A recent report by the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations showed a 6.8 per cent increase in global output, at 704 mt this year. This is expected to keep global prices under pressure through the year.

Against the mandatory buffer norm of 4.1 mt, wheat stocks in FCI’s central pool were 36.1 mt as on October 1. FCI has been struggling to manage foodgrains procured from farmers, due to shortage of storage facilities. [Exports](#) were meant to ease this pressure.

With attractive prices, vanilla makes a comeback

Price of green beans now edged up to Rs 400 -600/Kg, depending on quality of product, from Rs 130 -140, in last year

With [vanilla](#) prices witnessing a nearly 300 per cent rise over the past nine months, farmers in Kerala and Karnataka have started cultivating the spice again.

[Green beans](#) now command anything between Rs 400 and Rs 600 a kg, depending on the quality, up from Rs 130-140 a year ago.

M C Saju, director, Vanilla India Producers Company (Vanilco), told Business Standard that a one-metre vine now costs Rs 20. It had no value at all a year ago. During 2000-2004, the golden period of cultivation, good quality vine had a price tag of Rs 100-150 a metre.

Cultivation was active Kerala and Karnataka during 1999-2005, when prices skyrocketed in the global market. Then, green beans fetched up to Rs 1,200 a kg, largely because of a bad production season in [Madagascar](#), the world’s largest producer. As production resumed in Madagascar, vanilla prices crashed to as low as Rs 50 a kg, following which farmers stopped cultivating the spice.

Now the prices are up again. Saju claimed Vanilco is getting offers of Rs 20,000 for a kg of vanilla extract, which had no takers even at Rs 5,000 last year. Vanilco has a stock of 400 kg of vanilla extract.

Coffee prices set to fall further

A record off-year coffee crop in Brazil and bumper crops in Colombia and Vietnam have impacted global prices negatively



[Coffee prices](#), which were at a four-year low earlier this week, are likely to dip another 10 per cent in the next couple of months, with massive supplies from [Brazil](#), Colombia and Vietnam negatively impacting the markets.

Abundance of beans in the world market has continued to put pressure on prices. The ICE [Arabica coffee](#) futures for December delivery settled at \$1.1270 a pound, the lowest settlement for the most-actively traded contract since March 17, 2009. According to the Coffee Board of India, LIFFE Robusta coffee futures for November delivery settled at \$1,602 a tonne, down \$29.

Arabica prices are likely to stay in the range of 100-120 cents in the short-term period up to December, said Ramesh Rajah, president, Coffee Exporters' Association. "Last year, around this time of the year (October), Arabica was traded at 160 cents per lb (pound) and Robusta was above \$2,000 per tonne. The drop in demand from major European buyers and huge crop in top three producers such as Brazil, Colombia and Vietnam has resulted in the drop in prices," said Rajah.

Forecast for an improved crop in Colombia and big crop being harvested in Vietnam next month has spread negative sentiment in the markets. Already, Brazil has harvested a record "off-year" crop and is headed for another bumper crop for next year. Robusta prices might settle down by 10 per cent lower on the present levels of \$1,633 a tonne.

"Roasters shifted to Robusta coffee as it was cheaper in the recent months. They are now looking back at Arabica, as it is cheaper due to huge crop in Brazil. The Arabica terminal is facing pressure," said Damodar Kamath, managing partner, Bola Surendra Kamath & Sons.

Good rains across growing regions in Brazil, the largest producer of coffee in the world, has also created a negative sentiment in the markets as it would result good flowering for the next crop, traders said.

"Two years ago, Arabica was traded at 300 cents per lb and Robusta was traded at \$2,700-2,800 per tonne. The continued slowdown in demand from the major buying nations in Europe has resulted in the decline in prices and there is not much hope for revival in prices," said Kamath.

The harvesting of Indian crop will begin my mid-November. The crop is said to be at least 10-15 per cent lower than the Coffee Board's initial estimates. The board, in its post-blossom estimates, had pegged the production for this year at a record 347,000 tonnes. However, due to heavy monsoon rains in June, July and August, the crop is likely to be lower than the estimates.

The Indian exporters have begun the new crop year (October-September) with a record carry over stock of 30,000 tonnes. “Usually, the carryover stocks are in the range of 10,000 tonnes. This year, the exporters are sitting over record stocks and any drop in the new crop will be offset by carryover stocks,” said Rajah.

THE HINDU Business Line

Mixed trend in spot rubber

Kottayam, Oct.23:

Spot rubber was mixed on Wednesday. Sentiments turned neutral following an almost similar closing on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. Transactions were dull.

Meanwhile, the key TOCOM rubber futures declined, tracking the disappointing US jobs data, weak crude oil prices and the yen's rise against Greenback.

Sheet rubber continued to remain unchanged at Rs 160 a kg, according to traders. The grade, weakened to Rs 160 (Rs 161.0) at Kottayam and Kochi, as reported by the Rubber Board.

November futures closed at Rs 160.78 (Rs 160.72), December at Rs 162.85 (Rs 162.62) and January at Rs 164.55 (Rs 164.81) while the February and March futures were inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 declined at its October futures closed at ¥ 245.0 (Rs 154.96) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange

Spot rubber rates Rs/ kg were :RSS-4: 160 (160); RSS-5: 151 (151); Ungraded: 147 (147); ISNR 20: 152 (153) and Latex 60%: 120 (121).

Onions will be airlifted, if necessary: Pawar



Bangalore, Oct. 23:

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (Nafed) is ready to airlift onions at a short notice from China, Egypt or from neighbouring countries to contain prices, said Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar.

“I have spoken to Nafed; they have information that there is sufficient quantity of onions which can be imported at short notice,” Pawar told reporters on the sidelines of 8th national Krishi Vigyan Kendras conference.

Import of onions is the only short-term solution, he said.

“We have to import as early as possible. I have instructed the Managing Director of Nafed (that) if there is a request from any State, we should be ready,” said Pawar.

This measure is expected to bring down the price in the next 10-15 days, giving relief to consumers.

In the long term, the Government expects the new crop to hit the market in 3-4 weeks. Pawar also ruled out the possibility of traders exporting onions to countries where prices are lower than in India.

“Globally, onion prices are in the range of \$400-500 a tonne while domestic prices are hovering around \$900,” he said.

Pawar said: “With this price differential, there is no question of exports. I cannot take a unilateral decision on export ban. It has to be a collective effort. Tomorrow, the Food and Consumer Affairs Minister has called for a meeting and will discuss.”

He said the price rise was under the purview of the Food and Consumer Affairs Ministry. “I can speak only as a producer,” he said.

“Monsoon this year has been good but excess rainfall has hit supply. Also rains, a couple of weeks ago, have damaged the kharif crop further in key producing States - Maharashtra, Karnataka,” he explained.

The Government is expecting new crop to enter market from Rajasthan and other non-traditional onion growing areas in the next 2-3 weeks to ease prices.

PTI reports: Prices of old variety onions continued to surge to a new high. Only 51 tonnes of old onions arrived at the Lasalgaon Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee yard on Wednesday. Arrivals of the new red onions were 195 tonnes, sources said.

The old onion was auctioned at Rs 5,972 a quintal and the new crop at Rs 4,400-4,500.

AP rice millers threaten to boycott procurement

Hyderabad, Oct. 23:

About 6,000 rice millers in Andhra Pradesh have threatened to stop procurement this kharif season. (Paddy arrivals are expected to arrive from November 15 in markets.)

Millers said that they will stop delivering rice to the Government agencies for the public distribution system from Thursday. They have procured about one lakh tonnes of paddy so far this season. This tough positioning by the millers could impact paddy farmers who are expecting a higher income, thanks to good demand for the Sona masoori variety. For consumers, this could pose a tougher challenge in the next few months. Rice (sona masoori) is selling at Rs 55-65 a kg in the open market.

The Rice Millers Association of Andhra Pradesh, which represents 6,000 millers, who handle rice worth Rs 30,000 crore annually, has urged the State Government to increase handling charges and reduce taxes.

“If the Government fails to respond by November 15, we will not procure paddy. You should take care of the task yourself,” Association President T. Devendar Reddy said. The immediate trigger for millers’ anger was the October 23 Government Order that stipulated Rs 1,345 for Grade A variety and Rs 1,310 for common variety.

The Civil Supplies Department of Andhra Pradesh and Food Corporation of India mandate the millers to procure paddy from farmers and supply 75 per cent of the rice processed to both the government agencies.

Millers are asked to deliver 80 lakh tonnes of rice, including 55 lakh tonnes of white rice and 25 lakh tonnes of par-boiled rice. The Government said millers are free to transport superfine varieties (sona masoori) within the State without any restrictions.

Millers are allowed to sell the remaining 25 per cent of the rice in the open market.

“The handling (milling) charges stipulated by the Government are too low. They are giving Rs 15 for white rice and Rs 25 for par-boiled rice. Compared with this, Chhattisgarh offers Rs 65. We demand Rs 20 more for a quintal for par-boiled rice and Rs 30 for white rice as bonus, in addition to milling charges,” he said.

Millers alleged that taxes at seven per cent were adding to the overall price of rice. “While there are no taxes in the neighbouring States, we are levying taxes,” a miller from Warangal district said.

Austrade, YES Bank ink pact for knowledge sharing in food sector

New Delhi, Oct 23:

The Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) and YES Bank on Wednesday entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to explore avenues for mutually beneficial knowledge sharing in food processing and agricultural sectors.

The tie-up marked the start of a relationship in which Australia can offer to India some insights on how to expand food exports to Japan and Europe, said Nicola Watkinson, Minister Commercial and Senior Trade and Investment Commissioner-South Asia, Austrade. She said there were enormous possibilities for collaboration between the two countries given the similar challenges in agriculture sector.

According to the MoU, Austrade and YES Bank have agreed to jointly organise workshops across India to create awareness about Australian capabilities in the food and agri-business sectors.

Austrade will assist Australian companies in their expansion in India through identification of joint venture partners and investment opportunities in India.

Australia’s food exports are estimated at \$30 billion each year and nearly 60 per cent of its exports are accounted for by agricultural products.

Nitin Puri, President and Country Head, Food & Agribusiness Strategic Advisory & Research, said that the MoU was going to be “knowledge driven” and was not a commercial agreement. This MOU will initially be valid for one year, he said.

Excess rains may hit soya crop

New Delhi, Oct. 23:

Excess rains could reduce the soyabean crop for 2013-14 to around 10.2-10.3 million tonnes, according to the Solven Extractors Association.

“Despite the area under the crop increasing by 15 lakh hectares, the crop will be much lesser than last year’s 12.1 mt on account of heavy rains damaging the crop in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra both in terms of quality and quantity,” said association Executive Director B.V.Mehta.

The Monsoon's extended run and recent rains brought by the cyclonic storm Phailin had impacted the harvest, affecting the quantity and quality of the produce. "Till mid-September, we were very hopeful, but rains have damaged the crop" Mehta said. According to him, on account of expanded acreage this year – which was 122 lakh hectares, 14 per cent more than last year — the normal crop size should have been up at 13 mt. The Agriculture Ministry in its early projections had estimated the crop size at 15.68 mt, while the Indore-based Soyabean Processors Association of India was a bit conservative in pegging the crop at 12.98 mt.

Allow groundnut oil, rice bran oil exports, industry urges Govt

Ministry officials asked to scrap minimum export price

New Delhi, Oct 23:

The Solvent Extractors Association of India has urged the Government to allow bulk exports of groundnut oil and rice bran oil, a move that could help fetch better returns to farmers on impending bumper kharif harvest.

"We have met officials in the Food and Commerce Ministry and urged them to allow exports and do away with the minimum export price (MEP)," said B.V. Mehta, Executive Director, SEAI.

Currently, the MEP on edible oils, after the recent reduction of \$100 a tonne, is \$1,400. Mehta said the international prices are currently ruling at around \$1,000 a tonne and the high MEP does not make any sense.

Currently, edible oils in consumer packs of up to 5 kg is allowed for exports and total shipments in such packs are estimated at around 10,000 tonnes.

"The Government wants foreign exchange and there is a demand for bulk oil exports, especially groundnut oil from countries such as China, the US and Indonesia," Mehta said. The Government should look at allowing the shipments to encash the potential by imposing some quantitative ceiling, Mehta said.

The Government had banned exports of edible oils in bulk in 2008 as prices soared. It also imposed a MEP to discourage shipments.

Mehta said that allowing exports of groundnut oil would also help farmers get better realisation this year as the kharif groundnut crops size has been pegged at 47-48 lakh tonnes against last year's 26 lakh tonnes.

Timely and excess monsoon rains this year had helped farmers plant more groundnut especially in Gujarat, where the crop size is projected to be 26 lakh tonnes against last year's 6.9 lakh tonnes.

Further, demand for rice bran oil also exists from countries such as Thailand and Japan, he said.

India, which has developed and perfected a technique for the physical refining of rice bran oil, is the largest producer and the current production is estimated at nine lakh tonnes a year. India is the largest importer of edible oils and total consumption is estimated at 17.5 million tonnes growing annually at five per cent.

Heavy rain forecast for Andhra Pradesh, Odisha

Thiruvananthapuram, Oct. 23:

Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema bore the brunt as a rain-generating low-pressure area lay anchored half over land and half into the sea off South Andhra Pradesh coast on Wednesday.

Elsewhere, the North-East Monsoon was active over south interior Karnataka and Kerala during the 24 hours ending in the morning.

WESTWARD TRACK

The low-pressure area will track slowly west-north-west across the rest of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and enter the Arabian Sea by Friday, an India Meteorological Department (IMD) update said.

The Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services too noted “a low-pressure system tracking west from the Bay of Bengal”.

Above-average rainfall is favoured along the westward track of this system as it crosses south-central India, the US agency said.

“It should be noted that a low chance for tropical cyclone development exists across the north-east Arabian Sea when this system moves offshore from the west coast of India,” the US agency said.

An IMD warning said that heavy to very heavy rainfall would lash Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema until Thursday morning. Heavy rainfall would also occur at isolated places over Odisha, Telangana, coastal Karnataka, north interior and south interior Karnataka.

Forecast valid until Friday morning said that the heavy rain belt will stand pat over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Rayalaseema but associated rain bands will extend to Telangana and the whole of Karnataka.

Almost similar weather pattern is likely to pan out during the 24 hours that ends on Saturday morning as well.

NORTHWEST OUTLOOK

Meanwhile, Odisha and Gangetic West Bengal to the north-east also witnessed overnight rains until Wednesday morning.

The Climate Prediction Centre of the US National Weather Services said that the east and west coasts will receive varying amounts of rainfall during the week ending October 29.

Above-normal rainfall has been indicated for Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

But north coastal Tamil Nadu and entire Andhra Pradesh may experience below normal rainfall during the subsequent week (October 30 to November 5).

This period may also see the north-west Rajasthan and Punjab receive its first wave of showers of the rabi season, says the US agency. vinson.kurian@thehindu.co.in

Industrial demand lifts castorseed



Rajkot, Oct. 23:

Castor futures moved up on the back of increasing demand in the spot market.

However, despite improvement in demand, spot prices ruled steady as stockists indulged in profit booking.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, castorseed November contracts gained Rs 26 at Rs 3,643 a quintal with an open interest of 102,690 lots.

NCDEX December contracts increased by Rs 49 to Rs 3,895 with an open interest of 139,670 lots.

On the Rajkot Commodity Exchange, castorseed December contracts traded higher by Rs 37 at Rs 3,745 .

Spot castorseed was quoted at Rs 3,442.50.

Castor oil price gained Rs 5 at Rs 725 for 10 kg.

Market sources said that pick-up in

demand from paint industries in spot markets mainly encouraged trading sentiments in castorseed futures .

About 23,000-25,000 bags of castorseed arrived in Gujarat and prices were Rs 690-698 for 20 kg.

In Saurashtra region, about 4,600-4,700 bags of castorseed arrived and traded at Rs 650-676 for 20 kg.

Sugar stockists clear old stocks at lower rates



Mumbai, Oct. 23: Sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale spot market extended losses by Rs 5-10 a quintal as local demand was lower than arrivals.

Selling pressure at the upper mill level continued, however, prices ruled unchanged as producers held back and decided not to sell at lower rates.

Naka rates were steady on routine activities.

A Vashi-based wholesaler said that demand for the fine variety continued to be higher ahead of Diwali, while stockists preferred to sell their old fair quality stocks at

lower rates. Producers are continuously selling in local markets in the absence of neighbouring States' buying.

Arrivals in Vashi market were 62-63 truckloads (100 bags each) while local dispatches were also 60-61 loads.

On Tuesday, 14-16 mills offered tenders and sold about 43,000-45,000 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. *Naka* and mill tender rates were unchanged since last four-five days.

The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates were: S-grade Rs 2,892-3,042 (Rs 2,900-3,042) and M-grade Rs 3,002-3,251 (Rs 3,011-3,256).

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.

Poultry-feed seen ruling flat on steady inputs



Karnal, Oct. 23:

Poultry-feed prices may continue to rule flat for the next few days too as input costs rule steady, according to trade experts.

A marginal fluctuation in input prices kept poultry-feed prices unchanged on Wednesday.

Aditya Mishra, a commodity expert, told *Business Line* that steady demand and input cost kept feed products unchanged and prices may continue to rule around current levels over the next few days.

A steady trend has prevailed in the market following a range bound trend in the key ingredients of poultry feed, he said.

Except maize and bajra, all other ingredients were unchanged.

In the physical market, soyameal ruled unchanged at Rs 32,800 a tonne, while bajra improved by Rs 200 to Rs 12,200 a quintal.

Di-calcium phosphate sold at Rs 34.60 a kg, MBM sold at Rs 30 a kg while maize dropped by Rs 10 and went for Rs 1,460 a quintal. Rice bran oil ruled at Rs 59 a kg, while mustard de-oiled cake ruled flat at Rs 14,500 a tonne.

Feed products

Broiler concentrate quoted at Rs 1,960 for a 50-kg bag while Broiler Starter Mash sold at Rs 1,500. Pre-lay mash sold at Rs 1,025. Layer concentrate 25 per cent was sold at Rs 1,465 while Layer concentrate 35 per cent was at Rs 1,150.

Poultry Products

Meanwhile, a mixed trend was witnessed in the poultry products market on Wednesday. Broiler improved by Re 1 and quoted at Rs 57 a kg, egg went up by 14 paise and was at Rs 3.44, while chick went for Rs 18, Rs 3 down.

Pepper heading to Rs 500 a kg?



Kochi, Oct. 23:

The upsurge in spot and futures pepper markets continued on Wednesday following strong demand amid tight availability. Spot prices also continued to seek new levels each passing day, market sources told *Business Line*. If the current trend continues, spot prices might touch a

record Rs 500 a kg, a few traders said.

Strong domestic demand has aided the price rise, they said adding, those, including the industry, who had postponed their purchases earlier have started covering from all sources.

This, in turn, has squeezed the availability further pushing up prices.

Reports of likely release of an estimated 500 tonnes of pepper out of the estimated 6,800 tonnes of pepper locked up in warehouses, coupled with the continuous upsurge in the prices seem to have forced growers and primary market dealers who were holding the material to sell of late. As a result, some 62 tonnes of farm-grade pepper arrived on Tuesday and on Wednesday, arrivals were 72 tonnes. All were traded at Rs 445-455 a kg.

Meanwhile, as the supply scenario has turned tight, cartels and inter-State dealers from neighbouring States, who had bought good quantities earlier, are trying to push up prices. In the international market also, all origins except Brazil are ruling high and as a result, overseas buyers are reportedly on a wait-and-watch mode.

On the NMCE, November and December contracts increased by Rs 823 and Rs 1,058 respectively to Rs 46,510 and Rs 46,990 a quintal. On the IPSTA, November and December contracts rose to Rs 46,703 and Rs 46,500.

Spot prices rose further by Rs 500 a quintal on strong demand at Rs 44,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 46,500 (garbled) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at around \$8,000 (c&f) Europe and \$8,300 a tonne (c&f) for the US and Malabar is running ahead of everybody, they said. Lampong was reportedly not giving any quote, while Vietnam Asta was being quoted at \$7,900 a tonne, they said.

Rally in pulses may continue on fears of crop damage

Indore, Oct. 23: Strong buying support and weak arrivals have lifted tur prices in Indore *mandis* in the past one week by almost Rs 150 a quintal.

On Wednesday, tur (Maharashtra) was quoted at Rs 4,550 (Rs 4,375-4,400), while tur (Madhya Pradesh) increased to Rs 4,000-4,150.

Rise in tur and other pulse seeds in Indore mandis has been attributed to increased buying support from millers and traders ahead of Diwali. The bullish trend in tur and other pulse seeds will likely continue this week, said Rahul Vora, a local pulse trader .

Rise in tur has also lifted its dal over the past one week on improved buying support with tur



dal (full) being quoted at Rs 6,300-6,400, tur dal (full) at Rs 5,800-5,900, while tur dal marka ruled at Rs 7,000-7,100.

Slack arrival and strong demand have lifted urad prices by Rs 200 within a week, with urad (bold) being quoted at Rs 4,300 , while urad (medium) ruled at Rs 3,500-3,800 .

With arrival being lower on account of damage to the crops due to heavy rains and lesser import deals, rally in urad will likely continue in the coming days, said a trader. Urad dal (medium) was at Rs

4,800-4,900, urad dal (bold) at Rs 5,500-5,600, while urad mongar ruled at Rs 6,800-7,200.

Moong and its dal ruled stable on subdued demand and buying support with moong (bold) remaining firm at Rs 5,400-5,500, while moong (medium) ruled at Rs 4,500-4,800.

Given extensive damage to the crop this year due to rains, rally in moong will also likely to continue in coming days. Moong dal on (medium) was being quoted at Rs 6,300-6,400, moong dal (bold) at Rs 7,000-7,100, while moong mongar ruled at Rs 7,400-7,700 a quintal respectively.

Refineries hike palmolein rates; soya oil surges



Mumbai, Oct. 23:

A sharp jump in Malaysian palm oil futures lifted domestic soya oil futures by over two per cent on Wednesday.

However, soya oil ruled steady in the spot market.

Tracking bullish futures, palmolein gained Rs 2 for 10 kg in physical market, rapeseed oil Rs 3 and cotton refined oil Rs 5 for 10 kg each. Groundnut oil and sunflower oil were unchanged. Fear of increase in import duty on refined oil also weighed on the sentiment.

Local refineries increased their rates for palmolein by Rs 5-7 on higher buying support.

An observer said that domestic soya oil futures rose sharply on delay in new arrivals and fear of damage to standing crop on account of high moisture. Normally at this time, the daily average arrival of soyabean in Madhya Pradesh is about 8-10 lakh bags but this year, it has not crossed five lakh bags.”.

Rapeseed arrivals, due to lean season period, are hovering below one lakh bags. On expectation of a bullish trend, stockists are placing fresh orders and have covered over 2,500-2,800 tonnes of palmolein, soyabean refined and other oils.

Liberty, Ruchi and Allana sold materials to local traders.

Towards the day's close, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 585, super palmolein Rs 620 and super deluxe Rs 640, soyabean refined oil Rs 710 and sunflower refined oil Rs 820. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 577 ex JNPT and Rs 582, soyabean refined oil Rs 695 and sunflower refined oil Rs 771. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs 579-582, super palmolein at Rs 613 and sunflower refined oil at Rs 820.

In Rajkot, groundnut oil was up by Rs 10 to Rs 1,270 for *telia* tin and loose (10 kg) higher by Rs 30 to Rs 820. Soyabean arrivals were 6.50 lakh bags and prices were Rs 3,250-3,550 ex mandi and Rs 3,550-3,650 plant delivery. Mustard seed arrivals were 90,000 bags and its prices were Rs 3,225-3,600.

Malaysia BMD crude palm oil's November futures settled higher at MYR 2,488 (MYR 2,457), December at MYR 2,481 (MYR 2,457) and January at MYR 2482 (MYR 2455).

The Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg) were: groundnut oil 840 (840), soya refined oil 695 (695), sunflower exp. ref. 735 (735), sunflower ref. 785 (785), rapeseed ref. oil 740 (737), rapeseed expeller ref. 710 (707) cottonseed ref. oil 700 (695) and palmolein 575 (572).

Vikram Global Commodities (P) Ltd quoted Rs 645/10 kg for Malaysia super palmolein November delivery.
