



BASAI News Updates

Oct. 12, 2022

Can't abandon victims: Govt to seek addl aid in Bhopal tragedy

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NEW DELHI: Emphasising that it cannot abandon the victims of the 1984 Bhopal gas tragedy, the Union government on Tuesday told the Supreme Court that it has decided to pursue the case against Union Carbide for additional compensation.

A constitution bench, headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, was informed by Attorney General R Venkataramani that the Centre will press its curative petition that was filed in 2010 seeking compensation over and above the \$470 million already paid by Union Carbide, which is now a wholly owned subsidiary of The Dow Chemical Company.

"We are keen on pursuing the curative petition. The government cannot abandon the victims. It is a tragedy unfolding everyday," Venkataramani submitted before the bench, which also comprised justices Sanjiv Khanna, AS Oka, Vikram Nath and JK Maheshwari.

The government was conveying its decision after it had sought some time from the five-judge bench on September 19 to make up its mind on pursuing the petition.

Through the curative plea in 2010, the government sought a reconsideration of the May 1989 judgment and a 1991 order of the Supreme Court, arguing that the 1989 settlement was grossly inadequate. It sought additional funds of over ₹7,400 crore from the chemical company, which was held accountable for the loss of

more than 5,000 lives on the night intervening night of December 2-3, 1984 when the highly dangerous and toxic gas, Methyl Isocyanate (MIC), escaped from company's plant in Bhopal.

Appearing on behalf of the Union government on Tuesday, AG Venkataramani further submitted that there is a lot of materials and literature on various aspects of liabilities and damages that he would want to cite when the case is finally argued.

"The government wants to proceed but will need some time to put all the materials on record. I have gone through considerable literature on the reopening of settlement and I would wish to place a note for my lords," the law officer added.

Appearing for some NGOs and victims' organisations, senior counsel Sanjay Parikh and advocate Karuna Nundy commended the Centre's stand while making their request to be heard in the matter. They argued it were such organisations which had filed the review petition against the top court's main judgment in 1989, and thus kept the case alive.

Representing the chemical company, senior advocate Sidharth Luthra and some other lawyers questioned the maintainability of the pleas filed both by the Union government as well as other organisations.

The company pointed out that while the government never filed a review petition, it chose to pursue a curative petition 19 years later. "On the other hand, the NGOs and other groups filed a

38yrs on, the legal battle continues

1984: Over 5,000 people die in gas leak; Union Carbide India Ltd (UCIL) chairman Warren Anderson among 8 held; Anderson later released on bail

1985: India sues UCIL for \$3.3 billion in a US court

1986: US court transfers all Bhopal litigations to India

1987: CBI files charge sheet against Anderson, others

1989: Centre, UCIL strike out-of-court deal; firm hands over \$470mn as compensation

1992: Centre releases part of relief to victims; declares Anderson a fugitive

1996: SC dilutes charges against Indian officials of UCIL, subsidy of majority owned by Union Carbide Corporation (UCC)

1999: UCIL announces merger with US-based Dow Chemicals

2004: Amid protests, SC orders Centre to release remaining compensation

2010: Bhopal court convicts all accused, sentences them to two years in jail; Centre, CBI file separate curative pleas in SC, questioning the compensation and dilution of criminal charge

2011: Five-judge bench of SC junks CBI's plea

2012: US court says neither UCIL nor its chairman were liable for the tragedy

2014: Anderson dies

2020: SC lists curative plea for regular hearing; justice S Ravindra Bhat recuses himself from hearing the case

September 20, 2022: SC seeks Centre's stand on curative plea
October 11, 2022: Centre decides to pursue case, SC agrees for detailed hearing likely from January



review petition but did not file a curative petition. We object to the maintainability of both the curative petition as well as the applications of impleadment by the organisations," argued the lawyers. On this, AG Venkataramani submitted that the Centre does not have

any objection to anyone arguing the matter. "It is a question of adequacy of compensation. On what parameters the adequacy of compensation can be reopened is something that the Union government will have a larger role to argue on," he added.

The constitution bench then proceeded to record in its order, the Centre's willingness to pursue the matter against Union Carbide for additional compensation, and laid down other modalities for the detailed hearing which is expected to begin from January 10.

Union min reviews steps to curb pollution in NCR

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NEW DELHI: Union environment minister Bhupender Yadav on Tuesday convened a meeting on combating air pollution with the environment ministers of NCR states and Punjab, and reviewed the steps being taken by each state to control sources of pollution in their respective regions.

According to officials aware of the matter, the minister said a participatory and coordinated approach by all states will yield positive results this winter, even as all stakeholders focused on tackling stubble-burning in Tuesday's meeting.

Members of the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM), the environment ministers of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and senior government officials attended the meeting. Union minister of state for environment Ashwini Kumar Chouhey was also present, officials added.

During the meeting, CAQM made a detailed presentation on different aspects and the challenges in controlling air pollution in NCR. The aspects covered by the federal body included agricultural stubble-burning, industrial pollution, use of diesel generator sets, vehicular pollution, electric mobility, and dust from roadsides and construction and demolition activities.

Delhi-NCR plunges into an air emergency every year during winters when fumes from burning stubble in neighbouring states, vehicular pollution, construction and demolition activities, and road dust combine with meteorological factors that make dispersion of pollutants difficult and throw a noxious blanket of smog over the region.

Officials said the issue of stubble-burning was identified as the prime concern for all stakeholders, with actions taken and actions planned highlighted by each state.

"An update was provided regarding availability and alloca-



Officials said the issue of stubble burning was identified as the prime concern for all stakeholders, with the action taken and the actions planned being highlighted by each state. HT ARCHIVE

State govts have involved local bodies and are providing farmers with machinery to promote in-situ methods of handling residue.

CAQM OFFICIAL

tion of machinery by the state governments, and they have informed that they have involved local bodies and are innovatively providing the machinery to the farmers to promote in-situ methods of handling crop residue," said an official. Expansion of the total area under bio-decomposer solutions

was also identified as an important strategy towards in-situ stubble management, he added.

Officials added that Yadav was informed about steps taken to increase green cover, which in turn will reduce dust pollution. So far this year, 27 million saplings have been planted across NCR and 240.9km of roadside area was greened, officials said. In addition, 60 dust control and management cells have been set up by road owning and maintenance agencies across NCR.

State ministers also apprised Yadav of the progress made in NCR to shift industries to piped natural gas and other approved fuels.

On the vehicles front, states were directed to ensure all vehicles have a pollution under check (PUC) certificate.

They also reiterated their commitment to manage air pollution, and to implement directions of CAQM and the Union

ministry to address the issue.

Rai seeks full ban on firecrackers

Delhi environment minister Gopal Rai, after attending the virtual meeting on Tuesday, said more than two-thirds of the air pollution that comes into Delhi is from sources located outside the Capital.

He added that the Delhi government is asking for a collective and cohesive approach to combat air pollution in NCR.

Rai said like Delhi, firecrackers need to be completely banned in all NCR states. While Delhi has a complete ban on all types of firecrackers, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have permitted the use of green firecrackers on Diwali.

"A Regional Implementation Committee should be formed for the NCR states, which can continuously monitor the pollution in this region," Rai added.

Rainfall damages key crops, could stoke food prices

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NEW DELHI: Heavy rainfall across states has pushed back harvesting and damaged ripened summer-sown crops, such as rice, coarse cereals or millets, soyabean, pulses, cotton and horticulture produce, which could stoke food prices, farmers and analysts said.

Farmers are struggling to save their produce as continuous rains in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab have flooded fields and soaked crops, leading to grain loss.

Over the past two weeks, a moisture-laden trough, stretching from the coast of Gujarat into northern and central Indian states, pelted large swathes of the northern states with unseasonal showers. The wet spell has prolonged the retreat of the June-September monsoon.

Persistent downpours have damaged crops in at least 30 districts of UP, delaying potato sowing amid widespread damage to bajra or pearl millet, a coarse cereal, said Harshit Goel, a UP revenue department official.

The country witnessed an erratic monsoon this year. Rains skipped many paddy growing states, such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. A late surge in showers then inundated farms. Heavy rainfall is likely to continue over Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar during next 24 hours, the state-run India Meteorological Department (IMD) said in a forecast on Tuesday.

Farmers in Punjab and Haryana said they were waiting for the rains to stop to operate harvesting machines. "Harvesting of paddy

has come to a halt because combine harvesters cannot be operated in soft, wet soil. There will be considerable yield loss in paddy," said Karnal-based Rajinder Singh, a former agriculture officer with the Haryana government.

Heavy showers have damaged paddy in Patiala, Fatehgarh Sahib, Mohali, Mansa, Sangrur, Muktsar and Tarn Taran districts, where early varieties were sown and the crop was ready for harvest when the rains began in the last week of September, Singh said.

"The rains will likely result in a spike in food prices, especially of vegetables. Heavy rains have also hampered movement of food trucks," said Rahul Chauhan of IGrain. The showers have also heightened risks of pest attacks. "Weather would be congenial for infection of sheath blight in rice," a crop advisory bulletin issued by the Punjab government on Tuesday (Oct 11) stated. Cultivators should "maintain proper drainage system in their fields" to save crops, a separate advisory by the IMD said on Tuesday stated.

UP, the country's second biggest producer of rice, has received 500% excess rainfall in October so far, data from IMD showed.

Adequate harvests are critical this year amid a global food crisis. India banned the export of wheat in May and then put curbs on rice shipments as extreme weather pummeled crops.

The rains have delayed planting of vegetable crops and if hot dry weather follows, farmers may have to watch out for pest attacks, said Sanjay Sangroiya, a horticulture expert who formerly worked at Centre of Excellence for Vegetables in Haryana's Gharaunda.

Rain damages paddy in Karnal grain markets

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, OCTOBER 11

The fresh spell of rain today damaged paddy grains in the grain markets across the district, exposing the procurement arrangements made by the market committees.

Farmers expressed fear of facing losses due to high moisture content in their produce.

Farmers said untimely rainfall had drenched heaps of paddy lying in the grain markets and affected the harvesting season as well. "It may affect the quality of the crop too," they added.

As per the data, various agencies have procured 58,57,696 quintals of paddy, of which only 42,28,840 quintals (72 per cent) have been lifted.

Farmers complained of the insufficient availability of plastic sheets to cover paddy. They alleged that they were forced to bring plastic sheets from home.

It has been drizzling for three days, but the district received heavy rainfall today. The grain markets in Indri and Karnal were waterlogged.

"I have been camping here for two days to sell my produce, but due to rainfall,



Wet paddy bags; and (below) waterlogging at a Karnal grain market. TRIBUNE PHOTOS: SAYEED AHMED

VERY FEW PLASTIC SHEETS AVAILABLE

“I have been camping here for two days to sell my produce, but it was not procured due to rain. Paddy grains are soaked in the mandi as there are very few plastic sheets there.” **Ashok Kumar, FARMER**

it was not procured. Rain has also soaked paddy grains in the mandi as there are very few plastic sheets available there,” said Ashok Kumar, a farmer.

“We have to bring plastic



PADDY STOCK FOUND SHORT BY 68K QUINTALS

Amid reports of issuing “fake gate passes” for proxy procurement in various grain markets of Karnal, a team of the CM flying squad conducted a raid at the Jundla grain market and at different rice mills on Tuesday. Around 68,000 quintals paddy was not found in stock by the squad.

sheets from home as neither the arthiyas nor the officials have provided sheets to us,” another farmer said.

Sunder Singh Kamboj, secretary, Indri market committee, said water was drained off

from the grain market in time.

Deputy Commissioner Anish Yadav said all secretaries had been told to ensure that the arthiyas properly covered the paddy lying in the mandis using tarpaulin.

CM: Bajra farmers to get ₹450 a quintal under Bhavantar scheme

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 11

Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar today said the state government was procuring bajra at the minimum support price of Rs 2,350 per quintal this year, but the same was being procured at Rs 1,850-1,900 a quintal in the state mandis.

Under the Bhavantar Bharpayee Yojana, an amount of Rs 450 per quintal would be paid to the farmers to ensure that they do not face any loss, he said. The CM was speaking at the inauguration of the newly renovated media centre at the Haryana Civil Secretariat here.

He admitted that adverse weather conditions caused some problem in the procurement of crops, but now proper arrangements for smooth procurement had been ensured in every mandi. Till October 10, 59,414 MT of



MSP ₹2,350/QUINTAL

- ₹2,350/quintal is the MSP for bajra this year
- ₹1,850-1,900 a quintal is the price at which it is being procured in mandis
- Farmers would be compensated for the price difference, the CM said

bajra has been procured in the state, he said.

For the convenience of farmers, the CM launched e-kharid Haryana Mobile App. The bilingual app is available on the Google play store. It provides real-time data as regards the number of crops registered, gate pass issues and the quantity farmers could bring for procurement.

Deterrent plan to check stubble-burning in place

K'thala admn warns against suspension of arms licences, denial of passport verification to violators

DEEPKAMAL KAUR
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

JALANDHAR, OCTOBER 11

Choosing to hit where it hurts the most, the Kapurthala district administration has chosen a novel way to keep a check on cases of stubble-burning this time. As a deterrent, the administration has decided to suspend the arms licences and deny verification for passport to all those who indulge in paddy straw burning.

The authorities are of the view that such an action would be harsher than mere lodging of an FIR against the violators. "People of Punjab have two passions — to move abroad or to flaunt a weapon. So, we hope that such a warning will surely prevent them from harming the environment," said a senior official.

The authorities have also decided to get announcements in this regard made by BDPOs, panchayat secre-



taries and nambardars in the 157 hotspot villages, which have had a bad track record. Most of these villages are in Bholath and Sultanpur Lod-

hi subdivisions of Kapurthala. In all, there are 680 villages in the district.

Giving details of the harsh decisions on his agenda to pre-

vent environment damage, Deputy Commissioner Vishesh Sarangal said Kapurthala district had 1.18 lakh acres under paddy, which was expected to produce nearly 7 lakh tonnes of residue. Over 4,100 machines had been handed over to farmers, panchayats, and cooperative societies to manage the stubble and 651 new machines were being distributed in the current season, he added.

Besides, the DC said a cam-

paign had been initiated in schools wherein students had been asked to write slogans against stubble-burning in their notebooks on October 6, 8 and 10 and get these signed from any of their family member involved in farming.

He said as of date, 25 incidents of stubble-burning had been reported from the district of which 13 cases had been confirmed on double checking and red entries had been made in the *jamabandi*.

Playing with fire

Apropos of 'Hopes belied, again'; people of Punjab are now used to the problem of stubble burning. The government cannot spare funds to tackle this menace, even though millions are approved for farmers as loan waivers every year. The AAP government is fulfilling many poll promises, like 300 free units of electricity per month and job regularisation, but it, too, has failed to deal with this issue. All stakeholders should prioritise finding a solution to this problem. Otherwise, that day is not far when every second person would be suffering from asthma or other respiratory problems.

KUSHAGAR BANSAL, BY MAIL

Paddy arrivals touch 13.25 LMT in state

SANJEEV SINGH BARIANA

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, OCTOBER 11

The total paddy that has arrived in the state mandis till today since the commencement of the procurement season on October 1 is 13.25 lakh metric tonnes (LMT). More than 2.04 LMT of fresh paddy was procured today.

The recorded procurement figures put the government purchase at 12.50 LMT and private millers at 15,474 LMT. The government has paid Rs 1324.66 crore to farmers till now.

After a slow start in the initial days, the paddy arrival in the state mandis is slowly changing gear. Late September rains and scattered showers this week impacted the crop arrival in the mandis. The meteorological office predicts a clear sky in the state in the coming days.

The data on rainfall released by the Agriculture Department on Tuesday showed that Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district witnessed the heaviest

rainfall of 66.4 mm during the last 24 hours. This was followed by Ropar (27mm); Patiala (24mm), Jalandhar (17mm) and Fatehgarh Sahib (14.5 mm).

The state has installed a total of 2,258 mandis and as many as 452 are temporary yards, said Dr Anjuman Bhaskar, Joint Director, Department of Food and Civil Supplies.

The procurement will continue till the end of November. The state has a target of 187.28 LMT of paddy procurement and has sought a credit of Rs 46,000 crore from the Centre.

Ground reports show that adverse weather conditions during the paddy sowing season have led to delayed harvesting in Gurdaspur and Sangrur districts, besides certain other places. With a lot of moisture still to dry up, farmers are not bringing their stock to the markets. Paddy procurement in Ludhiana remains low with the grain markets in the district yet to witness the glut.