



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF
MILLETS
2023



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BASAI WEEKLY NEWS UPDATES

MARCH 05-11, 2023

Govt to tighten quality control norms for import goods

Press Trust of India

feedback@livemint.com

NEW DELHI: The government will come up with as many as 58 quality control orders (QCOs) for products such as aluminium, copper items and household electrical appliances in the next six months, in a move aimed at containing import of the sub-standard goods and boost domestic industry, a senior government official said.

The department for promotion of industry and internal trade (DPIIT) is working hard to promote manufacturing of high quality products in the country.

"Since 1987, only 34 QCOs have been issued. But now we are coming up with 58 QCOs in the next six months. The main objective is to stop import of sub-standard goods. These mandatory norms will be for domestic and foreign players," Joint Secretary in the DPIIT Sanjiv told PTL.

There will be 315 products standards under these orders.



There will be 315 product standards under these orders for products such as aluminium and copper items among others. MINT

The items, under these orders, cannot be produced, sold/traded, imported and stocked unless they bear the BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) mark.

"These QCOs will be notified within a year after following due process," he added.

He said that the move would also help in providing global markets for domestic goods.

In order to facilitate smooth implementation of these orders, particularly for micro and small industries, provisions for additional time periods to get BIS licences and upgrade their testing facilities are being contemplated, he added.

Similarly, exemption to very micro units (investment in plant and machinery up to ₹25 lakh) is

being contemplated on a case to case basis.

"With the notification of CCOs, manufacturing, storing and sale of non-BIS certified products are prohibited as per the BIS Act 2016," the official said. The violation of the law can attract a penalty of up to two years of imprisonment or with fine of at least ₹2 lakh for the first offence which increases to ₹5 lakh minimum for the second and subsequent offences.

Recently, BIS has confiscated 18,600 non-BIS certified toys during raids on several retailers including Hamleys, Wh Smith, Archies and Kids Zone in malls, airports and markets.

These orders are issued by the department in consonance with the WTO (World Trade Organisation) Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) for industries falling under its domain.

The agreement recognises that no country should be prevented from taking measures

necessary to ensure the quality of its exports or for the protection of human, animal or plant life or health, of the environment, or for the prevention of deceptive practices.

As a policy, the standards formulation of BIS has been harmonised as far as possible with the relevant standards as laid down by the International Organisation for Standardisation/International Electrotechnical Commission. The standard issued for any product is for voluntary compliance unless it is notified by the central government to make it mandatory through issuance of technical regulations primarily through notification of QCOs and compulsory registration order (CRO) of BIS conformity assessment regulations, 2018.

As on March 1 this year, BIS has issued about 22,228 standards, out of which 9,774 are product standards. Till date, only 404 standards have been made mandatory through notification of QCO/CRO.

ATTENTION TAXPAYERS!

LINKING OF PAN & AADHAAR IS MANDATORY



LINK ONLINE WITH LATE FEE OF ₹1000/-

LATEST BY 31ST MARCH 2023

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT LINKING YOUR PAN WITH AADHAAR

- Your PAN will become inoperative
- Filing ITRs will not be possible
- Pending Returns will not be processed
- Pending Refunds cannot be issued
- Pending proceedings, as in the case of defective Return, cannot be completed
- Tax will be deducted at a higher rate

For more Information, see Rule 114AAA of the Income Tax Rules, 1962

HOW TO LINK YOUR PAN WITH AADHAAR

- Visit <https://www.incometax.gov.in/iec/foportal>
- Under 'Quick Links' section, click on 'Link Aadhaar' option
- Next, enter Aadhaar number and PAN, and pay late fee of ₹1000/- through 'E-Pay Tax functionality' after following on screen instructions
- Once payment is complete, visit 'Link Aadhaar' section again and enter your name, mobile number, Aadhaar number and PAN
- Verify the information by selecting 'I agree to validate my Aadhaar Details' option and click on 'Link Aadhaar' option
- Enter the OTP received on your mobile number and click on 'Validate' to complete the linking process



For e-Brochures, scan QR code



Income Tax Department
Central Board of Direct Taxes

For more information, please visit: www.incometax.gov.in



For more information, scan QR code

Reorient farming to build heat tolerance

The wheat crop is exposed to temperature fluctuations during almost the entire season. Thus, the ability of the crop varieties of variable durations to withstand heat stress during all growth stages needs to be improved. To reap the full harvest of improved practices, the extension system must run campaigns to make farmers aware of the latest products and technologies and their relevance to different agro-ecologies, and also create awareness among the masses on the impending climate change chaos.

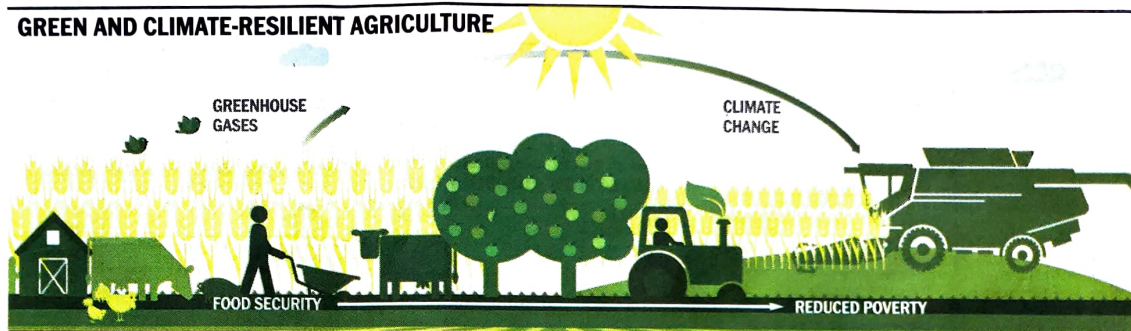
VS SOHU AND BS DHILLON

WHEAT is the second most important staple food of Indians, after rice. In Punjab, it is the most important rabi crop and a major contributor to the economy of the state and its farmers. The wheat crop is facing a major challenge due to early heatwaves. During the 2021-22 rabi season, extraordinary spikes in temperatures were witnessed. This coincided with grain development, when wheat is very sensitive to high temperatures. It adversely impacted ear length, grain number and grain boldness as well as forced advanced maturity by about 10 days. As a result, wheat yield dropped from 4,868 kg/ha (hectare) during 2020-21 to 4,216 kg/ha during 2021-22 in the state. Besides the grain produced had lower quality because of shrivelling and poor lustre. The national wheat yield dropped marginally from 3,521 kg/ha during 2020-21 to 3,484 kg/ha during 2021-22 due to erratic weather (high temperatures).

During the current rabi season, the unusual rise in temperature started even earlier. During February 5-11, 2023, the maximum and minimum weekly temperatures were 3°C above normal (recorded at PAU, Ludhiana); in the succeeding week, the maximum temperature was 3.3°C above normal (though the deviation of the minimum temperature was not as pronounced). On February 20, the maximum as well as minimum temperatures were markedly above normal (5.1°C or more) at many places in north India.

Anticipating adverse effects of an impending early heatwave on wheat yield and its consequences

GREEN AND CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE



LARGER PICTURE: FOCUS ON UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

BUILDING RESILIENCE

GREENING AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS

FIGHTING CLIMATE CRISIS



NO
POVERTY



ZERO
HUNGER



REDUCED
INEQUALITIES



RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION
AND PRODUCTION



CLIMATE
ACTION



LIFE BELOW
WATER



LIFE
ON LAND



PARTNERSHIPS FOR
THE GOALS

for food security, committees have been constituted at the national level to monitor the situation. The Punjab Government and PAU are also keeping a watch. PAU and other agricultural research institutions are issuing advisories for mitigating heat stress:

- **Increase the frequency of light irrigations:** If the temperature rises above normal, frequent light irrigation should be applied up to March-end. However, care should be taken to avoid heavy irrigation as it results in stress due to flooding.
- **Spray potassium nitrate or salicylic acid:** Apply 2% KNO₃ (4 kg potassium nitrate, 13:0:45, in 200 litres of water) or salicylic acid at the rate of 75 ppm (15 gm salicylic acid dissolved in 450 ml of ethyl alcohol using 200 litres of water) per acre at ear emergence and ear-

ly milk stage in the evening hours. For rabi 2023-24, the following points should be taken care of before the advent of the season:

- **Heat-tolerant wheat varieties:** The high temperatures during 2021-22 provided an opportunity to assess the performance of heat-tolerant varieties in the farmers' fields across the state. The surveys revealed that PBW 766 (Sunehri) was the best, having higher yield with minimum reduction in yield under heat stress. Other varieties such as PBW 824, PBW 869, DBW 187 and PBW 677 also performed well. Further, in the all-India coordinated research trials conducted at the national level, PBW 826 ranked first for grain yield in the north-western plains zone (Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, and parts of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu,

Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) during all three years of testing, including the heat stress season of 2021-22. Furthermore, the heat tolerance capability of PBW 826 was confirmed by its release in the north-eastern plains zone (eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Assam and plains of NE states) which is warmer than the western zone.

- **Sowing date-dependent varietal choices:** Appropriate wheat varieties are available for normal and late sowings. But there is a tendency to sow varieties suitable for normal sowing because of their higher yield potential, even under delayed sowing. These varieties have longer duration and when sown late, suffer more due to heat stress. Thus, varietal choice should be based on the sowing date.

- **Long-duration rice varieties:** The cultivation of long-duration rice varieties such as Pusa 44 and Pusa Dogar, besides causing ill effects (depletion of groundwater, pollution due to straw burning), delay wheat sowing, making wheat more vulnerable to heat stress. The cultivation of such varieties should be prohibited.

- **Conservation agriculture:** Sowing wheat using Happy Seeder in rice residue-retained fields provides a mulch on the soil surface. This mulch keeps soil and canopy temperatures mild during March-April and enables the crop to bear high temperature stress.

The wheat crop is exposed to temperature fluctuations during almost the entire season. Thus, the ability of the varieties of variable durations (for different sowing times) to with-

stand heat stress during all growth stages needs to be improved. The ICAR's All-India Coordinated Wheat and Barley Improvement Project and agricultural universities in Punjab and other states are alive to this situation, but need more resources to strengthen these activities so as to face the emerging challenge of high temperatures.

To reap the full harvest of improved practices, the extension system must run campaigns to make farmers aware of the latest products and technologies and their relevance to different agro-ecologies, and also create awareness among the masses on the impending climate change chaos.

Sohu is HoD, Plant Breeding & Genetics, and Dhillon is former VC, PAU, Ludhiana

SOURCE: FACTORY

ICHR plans global collaboration for 'India-centric' research work

Fareeha Iftikhar

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NEW DELHI: The Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR) is looking at global collaborations to conduct "India-centric" research, and has recently signed an agreement with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) of the UK to work on the country's creative industries and cultural heritage, a top official said.

The council, an autonomous institution under the education ministry, will explore more such opportunities with other countries, including Japan, Australia and Israel, said Umesh Ashok Kadam, member secretary at the ICHR.

"ICHR had many International collaborations that expired amid the Covid-19 pandemic and they could not be renewed. Now, we are working on renewing some old collaborations and exploring new ones. However, this time, we would only have India-centric

OFFICIALS SAY AIM IS TO PROMOTE THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM AND METHODOLOGY, WHICH 'HAVE NOT BEEN GIVEN THEIR DUE CREDIT'

themes," Kadam said. "Our previous collaborations with the UK were more euro-centric and now it is completely going to shift to Indian. We signed one agreement with the UK's AHRC last month," he added.

The ICHR wants to present a "global face" through these collaborations, Kadam said. "Through this effort, ICHR is also trying to promote the Indian knowledge system and Indian methodology, which have not been given their due credit," he said. "We want to tell the world about India's scientific temperament of

research. We have to understand our history not just within our own realm, but also have to see it through the contours that connect," he added.

Elaborating on the collaboration with AHRC, Kadam said under creative industries, the topics covered include India's contribution in performing arts, advertisements, architecture, arts and crafts, design, films, and music and photography across ancient, medieval and modern times. "In cultural heritage, we will cover topics including science and technology, astronomy, mining, textile industry, metallurgy, law, and democratic values. The baseline will be India oriented," he said.

The ICHR and AHRC will work on at least 10 research projects and conduct workshops and seminars.

"We are also looking to have an exchange of Indian sources lying across the UK in libraries and archives," Kadam said.

Flowering fields

NDMC will attempt to indigenise tulips by collecting the bulbs of plants used this year and sending them to CSIR lab in Palampur, Himachal

140,000

Tulip bulbs planted in New Delhi this year

500,000

Tulip bulbs to be planted next year

1,400

NDMC gardeners deployed to take of the tulips

THE CURRENT PROCESS

- NDMC starts preparation for tulip plantation in July-August
- Bulbs are imported from the Netherlands in early Dec and planted in Dec-end
- It takes 30-40 days for them to bloom
- Blooming period lasts from February to early March (20-30 days)

WHAT HORTICULTURE DEPT WILL DO NOW

- Bulbs will be allowed to dry up in the soil for one month
- Bulbs will be stored in specialised packaging used to import them and stored in low-temperature conditions
- The survival rate of these bulbs in various conditions will be studied to test appropriate conditions for plantation and growth

Plans to indigenise tulip bulbs in works

Paras Singh

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: In a bid to plant tulips in the Capital, the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has decided to use bulbs of flowers which have wilted to indigenise the flower, officials aware of the matter said on Sunday.

Currently, the NDMC imports all the tulips it plants from the Netherlands, and officials said that their plantation is carried out in the city in mid-December. The tulip season ends in early March.

"The import cycle is repeated every year but now we have decided to collect the bulbs from wilted plants and use them to create fresh bulbs out of them," the official said.

The council plans to rope in the CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Biore-source Technology (CSIR-IHBT) in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, for the trials. "We have been communicating with NDMC to supply the

exhausted tulip bulbs to us. Along with our local farmers, we can try to propagate these imported bulbs under various conditions," said Dr Sanjay Kumar, outgoing director of CSIR-IHBT.

This comes even as the city is ramping up its tulip count in the spring. Lieutenant governor VK Saxena on February 11 said NDMC procured 140,000 tulip bulbs this year against the 40,000 last year.

A second NDMC official said the bulbs are sourced from the Netherlands at ₹30-40 per unit. "Since the number of flowers is expected to be increased, we plan to undertake the research and development process so that the pre-treated Dutch production can be replicated in our country," he said.

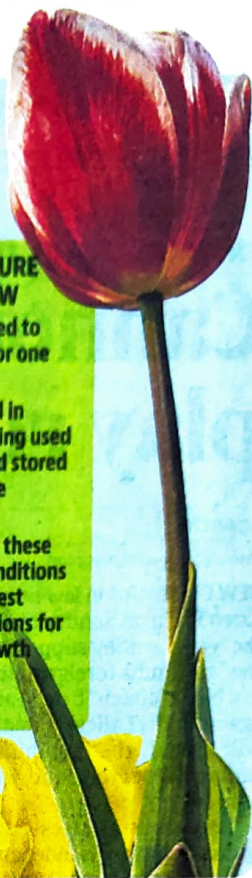
NDMC starts the preparation for plantation of tulips in July-August by inviting open tenders, the second official said. "After importing the flower bulbs, they are kept in quarantine, followed by keeping them in low temperatures. Planta-

tion of the bulbs is carried out in the second week December and it takes 30-40 days for them to bloom," he said.

The official said the tulip flowering period was now over and bulbs will be allowed to dry up in the soil for a month. "The bulbs will then be stored in specialised packaging. The survival rate of these bulbs in various conditions to be studied in Palampur. We had tried reusing the bulbs in Delhi weather last over two years but it had failed," the official said.

CSIR-IHBT's Kumar said talks with NDMC are in an advanced stage. "We have been experimenting with tulips and we have been successful in creating a garden completely made from indigenous bulbs of tulips sourced from Lahaul," he said.

"The process is in pipeline. Once the new director assumes office, things will likely get in motion," IHBT public relations officer Dr Shashi Bhushan said.



Govt plans to double down on rice, millet stocking amid heat threat to wheat yield

Zia Haq

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The central government, aware of the high chances of heatwaves over food-bowl states and their potential impact on the wheat harvest, will get by with enough stock of rice and millets to meet the country's food security needs, according to procurement plans put in place.

The government aims to procure 34.1 million tonne of wheat at federally determined prices. Even if rising temperatures do impact wheat output, as they did last year, estimates are available on the extent to which yields could drop, an official said, seeking anonymity.



The Centre aims to procure 34.1 million tonne of wheat at federally determined prices.

To tide over any shortage, the government has doubled down on paddy purchases and has asked states that grow millets to draw up elaborate networks to buy the hardy cereals. Millets have been at the centre of India's

campaign this year to promote their consumption globally.

Until March 1, the government has bought 71.3 million tonne of paddy, paying farmers ₹1.4 lakh crore in support prices, according to official data.

Authorities have targeted to purchase 76.6 million tonne of summer-sown paddy (equivalent to 51.4 million tonne of rice). Of winter-sown paddy, they plan to buy 15.8 million tonne (equivalent to 10.6 million tonne of rice). Together, the government's paddy stockpile is expected to be 90 million tonne, official projections show.

A heatwave will surely cut wheat yields but the government's food-management plan

hinges on careful allocation of rice, wheat and even millets to meet the country's food security needs, which includes free grains for 800 million people, the official said.

Last year, state purchases of wheat were abnormally low at 18 million tonnes, down nearly 58% from the previous year after a disastrous spell of heatwave cut output by 2.5% to 106 million tonnes.

The country is watching out for extreme weather as both the India Meteorological Department and private forecasters have predicted high chances of a heatwaves in March through May that could roil the farm economy amid rising prices of staples such as rice and wheat.

Winds may flatten wheat crop, impact yield

KARAM PRAKASH

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

In a major concern for wheat growers in the north-western region, especially Punjab and Haryana, the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday forecast strong surface winds (20-30 km per hour) during the next two

DOUBLE WHAMMY

Farmers already fear losses due to high temperatures

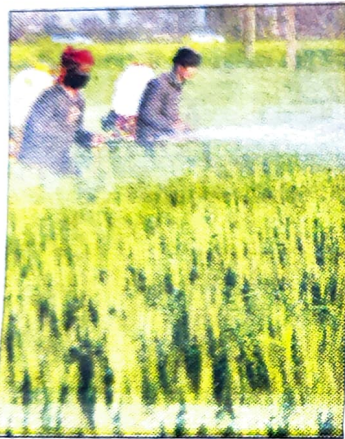
days. The winds are likely to flatten standing wheat crop and hit wheat yield. This could be a double whammy for farmers who are already fearing yield loss due to

abnormally high temperatures in February and March.

"Under the influence of a western disturbance, strong winds are likely over the plains of north-west India during the next two days," said an IMD official. Dr OP Bishnoi, a wheat specialist at Chaudhary Charan Singh

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Today's issue is of 20 pages, including six-page additional pullout (Spectrum).



Winds may...

Haryana Agricultural University, said the winds were likely to lead to lodging (bending) of wheat crop.

Dr Bishnoi said though pleasant weather or light showers would be helpful for the growth of the wheat crop, strong winds would adversely impact the standing crop.

Mustard selling below MSP, farmers cry for help

**PARVEEN ARORA/
DEEPENDER DESWAL**

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL/HISAR, MARCH 5

After fetching a good price in the past two years, mustard crop has disappointed farmers this year. It is being procured by private players below the minimum support price (MSP), which is Rs 5,450 per quintal.

Farmers say the government is yet to start procurement while private players are buying their produce in

the range of Rs 4,600 to Rs 5,000 per quintal.

Farmers have asked the government to start the procurement process at the earliest so that they can sell their produce at least at the MSP.

Agriculture Minister JP Dalal today announced in Bhiwani that the government would start procurement of mustard on March 28.

Ajay Kumar, a farmer of Khera village in Indri block, said in 2022, mustard was procured between Rs 6,000 and



A woman harvests mustard crop.

Rs 6,600 per quintal by private purchasers, while in 2021, it was procured between Rs 5,000 and Rs 5,500 per

'START PROCUREMENT'

- Crop being bought by private players in Haryana below MSP, which is ₹5,450 per quintal
- Farmers have asked the government to start the procurement process at the earliest
- Agriculture Minister JP Dalal announced that procurement would start on March 28

quintal. "During the off season in 2021, I sold mustard at Rs 8,000 per quintal. This season has been bad," he said.

"The MSP of mustard is Rs 5,450 per quintal, but it is being procured between Rs 4,600 and Rs 5,000 per quintal, which is a loss to the farming community. The procurement prices are coming down with each passing day," said Nawab Singh, a farmer.

"Farmers are being forced to sell their produce at throw-away prices by the private players as the government is yet to start procurement," said Jai Singh, another farmer.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

Mustard selling below...

The initial harvesting trend of the crop has indicated that the average yield has come down drastically as it suffered extensive damage due to freezing cold and ground frost during the peak winter season in January. Farmers and agriculture experts had stated that the average yield was likely to fall due to the adverse weather conditions when the crop was at the flowering stage.

Mustard is sown on 6.50 lakh hectares in the state with Hisar, Bhiwani, Rewari, Mahendragarh and Rohtak being the major mustard growing districts. The government has set a mustard production target of 13.65 lakh tonnes with an average yield

of 2,100 kg per hectare, which is about 8.5 quintals per acre.

Hoshiyar Singh, a farmer of Kirtan village in the Balsamand region, which recorded sub-zero temperature in January, only got one quintal mustard from three acres. "I used to harvest about seven to nine quintals per acre. This year, the yield has been poor," he said. Dr Ram Avtar, a mustard breeder scientist at Chaudhary Charan Singh Agriculture University, said they had conducted a survey and had expected a fall in the per acre yield this season. "The crop sown on unirrigated land adjoining Rajasthan in Hisar, Bhiwani, Mahendragarh and Rewari districts is the worst hit," he said.

Climate, yield drop turn India into net cotton importer

Zia Haq

zia.haq@htlive.com

NEW DELHI: India has turned into a net importer of cotton from being the world's second-largest overseas seller, a decline analysts attribute to waning productivity, the climate crisis and higher demand, all of which have made clothing and non-apparel fabric pricier.

The government has announced new steps to boost

output to reverse stalling exports, as the country's cotton import bill rocketed 200% in 2022-23 despite India being the world's largest producer. Higher costs weigh on the country's textile sector, a large employer.

In this financial year, exports slumped to \$512.04 million in the April-December period from \$1.97 billion in same period in the previous year. Imports rose from \$414.59 mil-

lion to \$1.32 billion in the corresponding period.

The Cotton Association of India has cut India's expected output in 2022-23 to 33 million bales of 170 kg each, which is 925,000 bales less from its initial projections. Production has been sliding. Output fell to a decade's low of 30.7 million bales of cotton in 2021-22.

Hotter temperatures, patchier rains, pests and drought linked to climate change

threaten much of the cotton produced in India, researchers have warned. Growing seasons have shortened in states such as Maharashtra, dwindling yields, according to a June 2022 report by Cotton 2040, an outfit advocating a climate-resilient fibre industry.

The government had waived customs duty on import of cotton between April and September to ease prices for factories and consumers. "A few product

categories such as textile, apparel and leather have been showing tepid growth as export demand for these products have been mellowing," the annual Economic Survey 2023 said in February.

In February, clothing major Raymonds reported 5.4% fall in third-quarter profits, while those for Arvind Ltd fell by 9%. "One of the key reasons for the crisis is stalling productivity as the gains from the current cot-

ton crop technology has waned. Farmers are suffering," said Anil Ghanawat of the Shetkari Sangathana, a farmers' collective.

The government hasn't approved any new genetically modified (GM) technology since permitting first-generation GM cotton in 2002. The current GM technology has runs its course, experts say, and is less effective against bollworms that drill into the crop's fibre balls.

Water crisis may worsen as levels in Yamuna dip further, 2 plants hit

Paras Singh

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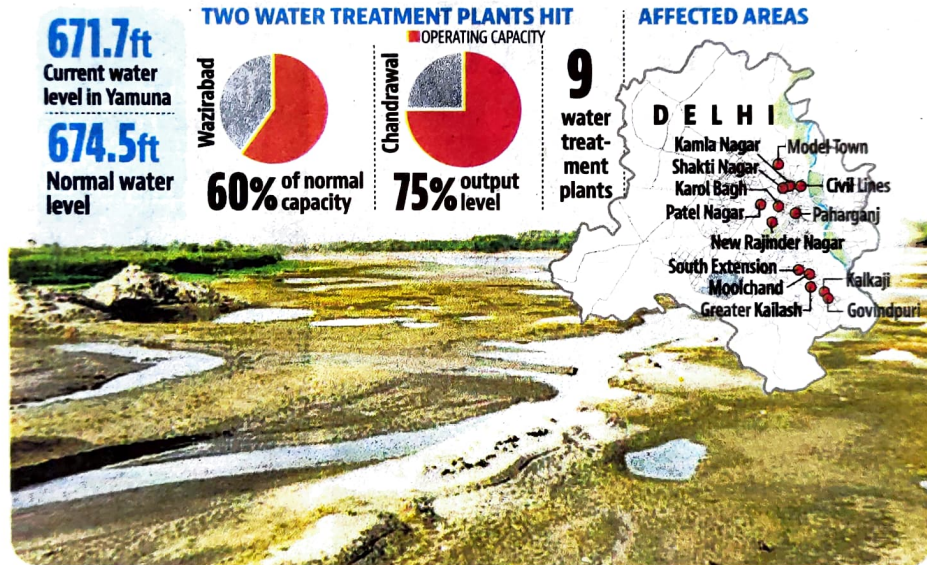
NEW DELHI: The ongoing water crisis in several parts of the Capital is likely to intensify with the low levels of water in the Yamuna affecting production of fresh water at a second treatment plant, officials aware of the matter said.

The officials said the water level in the Yamuna has reached 671.7 feet, almost 2.8 feet below the normal levels of 674.5 ft at the Wazirabad barrage – considered the standard for measuring water in the river. Water level in the river had started dipping since February 25, when the first alert was issued by Delhi Jal Board.

Low water levels had earlier hit production at the Wazirabad treatment plant, and now production at the Chandrawal plant has also been hit. While officials say there is no clear distribution of the areas under these two water treatment plants, they cover parts of north, south and central Delhi. To be sure, several areas in south and north Delhi such as Moolchand, South Extension, Greater Kailash, Civil Lines and Model Town have been getting water at low pressure since February 25.

A senior DJB spokesperson

Poor flow from Haryana affects supply: DJB



said Yamuna continues to receive poor flow of raw water from Haryana which has led to an acute shortage of water in the Wazirabad pond. "Both the main water treatment plants (Wazirabad and Chandrawal) are now working at low efficiency," official added.

Delhi primarily gets 40% raw

water from Yamuna through Haryana and rest from Ganga from Uttar Pradesh and Bhakra Nangal from Punjab. The Wazirabad Barrage forms the primary holding area where raw water is lifted for Wazirabad and Chandrawal treatment plants.

According to the DJB status

report on Monday evening, the Wazirabad plant was operating at 60% capacity and Chandrawal plant at 75% capacity. DJB operates nine treatment plants.

Of the total 995 MGD (million gallons per day) of Delhi's daily water supply — almost a quarter of the overall supply (over

230 MGD) is supplied by Chandrawal and Wazirabad plants. "When the water levels go down in the river or we face increased pollution in the river stream, Wazirabad, Chandrawal and Okhla plants are impacted," the DJB official added.

According to a DJB advisory on Monday, water supply may be available at low pressure in Civil Lines, Kamla Nagar, Shakti Nagar, Karol Bagh, Paharganj and NDMC areas. It added that the supply may also be hit in New Rajinder Nagar, Patel Nagar, Kalkaji, Govindpuri, Tughlakaabad, Sangam Vihar and Ambedkar Nagar. "Public is advised to make judicious use of water and water tankers will be made available," the advisory said.

Rajeev Suri, a resident of Defence Colony, said some parts of the colony has been getting water at low pressure for the past one week. "By Monday, we have seen only partial restoration of water supply," he said. Rahul Seth, a resident of Ratan Park said neighbourhoods in Ramesh Nagar and Moti Nagar have not received regular water supply since March 3. "DJB should at least tell us when the water supply will be restored," he said.

Financial woes, storage issue force farmers to sell mustard produce to private players

PARVEEN ARORA

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, MARCH 6

Financial burden on farmers and the dearth of storage facilities have forced small farmers to sell their mustard crop to private players below the minimum support price (MSP) before the commencement of government procurement by agencies.

Farmers say most of them have small landholdings, and they cannot afford to hold their produce for a month to sell it on MSP, as they do not have the required storage and space to get their crop dried before storing it.

"I have cultivated mustard crop on 2 acres. I have to sell it at Rs 5,000 per quintal. I cannot wait for the commencement of government procurement, as I have borrowed money from my arhtiya. Selling my produce at the loss of Rs 450



SELLING TO PVT BUYER HELPED SAVE INTEREST

“I have cultivated mustard crop on 2 acres. I have to sell it at ₹5,000 per quintal. I cannot wait for the commencement of government procurement, as I have borrowed money from my arhtiya. **Isham Singh, A FARMER OF INDRI BLOCK**

per quintal to a private buyer at least helped me save the interest of a month on the money I have borrowed from the arhtiya on inter-

est,” said Isham Singh, a farmer of the Indri block.

Another farmer Shamsher Singh from the Assandh block said they had to sell

their produce after harvesting as they do not have enough space to get it dried and store it for around a month.

Farmers also avoid the registration of crops on the “Meri Fasal Mera Byora” portal, which is mandatory to sell the crop on the MSP as farmers consider it a lengthy process. “We are not aware of the registration of our crop. Without registration, we cannot sell it on the MSP,” said Jatinder Kumar, another farmer.

On delay in procurement, Kailash Bhagat, chairman, Hafed, said the procurement of mustard would start from March 28. The farming community had been demanding the early procurement of mustard. “I will request the Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar to prepone the procurement process to assist the mustard-growing farmers,” said Bhagat.

India must urgently build heat resilience

Delhi's spring was once short but glorious. Weeks in February and March would see roundabouts overflowing with seasonal flowers, and residents out in public enjoying the salubrious weather. But the climate crisis appears to have put paid to that. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Capital's maximum temperature will likely remain above the 30-degree mark in the coming days, with the mercury set to touch 34 degrees Celsius by the end of the week. Two coastal districts of Karnataka also recorded the season's first heatwave in an area where cool sea breezes moderate temperatures even in peak summer — indicating that rising temperatures were not just a localised phenomenon.

If this is how the weather will behave (there are indications that such variations will only increase), policymakers across the board — from housing to agriculture — must gear up for these changes and work towards resilience. In 2022, a scorching heat wave in March shrivelled wheat yield in the north and central Indian states. This year, the government has already moved to form a panel to safeguard the yield, but as experts have argued, more long-term measures, including exploring more heat-resistant varieties of wheat, may have to be considered. The State must also prepare citizens for heatwaves and work on a tabulating mechanism for heat-related deaths, while working on thermally comfortable infrastructure, especially for poor and marginalised people who have no choice but to venture outside even in extreme heat for livelihood. There are already indications that the government is focusing on this — on Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting to review heat preparedness. With climate mitigation efforts stuck in geopolitics and funding knots, the only immediate remedy appears to be building heat resilience.

Govt revives tweaks to curb unfair e-tail practices, fix liability

Rajeev Jayaswal

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NEW DELHI: The Union government has revived its 20-month-old proposal to protect customers against unfair practices by e-commerce marketplaces such as Amazon and Flipkart by amending consumer protection rules to bar these firms from selling their private labels on their platforms, make them liable for frauds committed by a seller, and prohibit them from having their own logistics chain for supply-chain management, three people aware of the matter said.

Although the move — initiated by the ministry of consumer affairs, food and public distribution — has a limited scope confined to consumer protection, proposed changes could have far-reaching consequences for the e-commerce business in India, the people added, requesting anonymity. While two of the three people mentioned above are government officials, the third person is an executive in an e-commerce company.

THE PROPOSED CHANGES COULD HAVE HUGE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE E-COMMERCE BUSINESS IN INDIA

The move to amend the Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020 was first initiated by the department of consumer affairs in June 2021 after the government received complaints from “aggrieved” consumers and traders against “widespread cheating and unfair trade practices” by e-commerce entities, they said.

On June 21, 2021 the government proposed several amendments in the rules and sought stakeholders’ view. The original consumer protection rules for e-commerce was notified by the centre on July 23, 2020.

The proposal was put on backburner after some arms of the government — during inter-ministerial consultations — expressed concerns that some

continued on →15

Focus on Preventive and Promotive Healthcare through the 'Eat Right India' Movement

fssai



Pushkar Singh Dhama
Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

FSSAI has embarked on a large-scale effort to transform the country's food system in order to ensure safe, healthy and sustainable food for all Indians through the 'Eat Right India' movement. The tagline 'Sahi Bhojan, Behatar Jeevan', thus forms the foundation of this movement.

- The wisdom of the ages captured through Ayurveda and Yoga teaches us to be conscious and mindful of what we eat, when we eat and how we eat. But with our changing lifestyles, food habits are increasingly driven by convenience and impulse.
- All people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, should have access to safe and nutritious food, which is fundamental to good health and sustaining life with dignity.
- In the preamble to the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is expected to ensure the availability of safe and wholesome food for the people in India.



Food Safety & Drug Administration Uttarakhand

Food & Drugs Administration (FDA) Uttarakhand was constituted on May 30, 2019 by Uttarakhand Government to effectively implement various Food Safety and Drugs Control laws e.g. Food Safety and Standards Act 2006, Drugs and Cosmetics Act 1940 and Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. FDA Uttarakhand is headed by Food Safety and Drug Commissioner, and has its headquarter at Office of Director General, Medical Health and Family Welfare, Danda Lakhond, Sahasradhara Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

FDA has been constituted with four wings

FDA has the responsibility of ensuring the availability of safe and hygienic food and to ensure that the drugs and cosmetics sold in Uttarakhand are safe, effective and conform to quality standards. To achieve above objectives FDA performs following main activities.

Food Safety Wing **Drug Control Wing** **Laboratory Wing** **Vigilance Wing**

THE INITIATIVES

Food Safety Training and Certification Scheme (FOSTAC)

FSSAI has specified procedures and practices to be followed by food businesses for actively controlling hazards throughout the food value chain. Every FBO is required to have a documented Food Safety Management System (FSMS) plan and comply with good hygiene and manufacturing practices as laid down under Schedule 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Regulations, 2011.

Clean Street Food Hub (CSFH)

This initiative aims to raise the quality of street food vending to the level of food courts and established hotels and restaurants. It also aims to upgrade food streets and build trust among consumers about enjoying safe and hygienic local eating experiences.

BHOG-Blissful Hygienic Offering to God

BHOG is an initiative to encourage places of worship to ensure the health and welfare of the pilgrims by educating food handlers in the premises and vendors in the surrounding areas about proper food safety and hygiene.

Eat Right Station

The Eat Right Station initiative is designed to ensure that safe and wholesome food is served to passengers, visitors to railway stations and railway officials.

Clean and Safe Meat Shops

Meat retail shops sell meat products after minor processing or no processing at all. They are considered a high-risk retail sector and must comply with licensing and food safety requirements, have a trained Food Safety Supervisor and ensure safe and hygienic practices.

Clean and Safe Mithai Shops

Mithais (sweets) are an essential part of Indian cuisine and culture. Sweet shops handle high-risk food products such as milk and milk products (where adulteration, use of artificial colours and food hygiene are common issues).



HYGIENE RATING INITIATIVE

Restaurants & Catering Establishments

Hygiene rating implies that a restaurant, including cafes, diners, eating joints and caterers are all compliant with the Schedule 4, FSS Regulations 2011. Once a Hygiene Rating Certificate is earned by an FBO, it can be displayed prominently in their premises. This will boost their business as a safe place to eat by helping consumers make informed choices.



Food Fortification

Food fortification is a useful complementary strategy to address the widespread micronutrient deficiencies in our country. It involves adding small amounts of vital micronutrients to staple foods, for which the FSSAI has defined standards of fortification.

Eat Right Campus (ERC)

The Eat Right Campus initiative has a two-fold objective: it helps to create an environment of safe food and healthy eating for residents and visitors in various campuses through compliance to a set of well-defined parameters; and equally importantly, it continuously reiterates the message of 'mindful eating habits' in places that are part of our daily routine e.g. at people's workplaces, colleges, institutes or any other campus.



Eat Right School

Poor eating habits impact not only the physical, but also the mental and cognitive development of children. Schools are well-poised to influence dietary practices and promote lifelong healthy habits, as students spend an average of 7-8 hours per day in school and are strongly influenced by peers and teachers.

Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO)

FSSAI has launched the Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative, an ecosystem to enable the collection and conversion of Used Cooking Oil (UCO) to biodiesel, soap or other products, which is good for the health of people and the planet.



Food Safety on Wheels

Food Safety on Wheels performs three key functions -

Testing, Training and Awareness generation. The mobile labs are equipped with basic testing infrastructure plus training facilities including an LED screen and awareness material in the form of videos/ audios/ flyers and manuals.



FSSAI & Uttarakhand FDA signed MoU from year 2021 for 'Strengthening of Food Safety Ecosystem'

- Strengthening of enforcement and compliance system.
- Strengthening of food testing system.
- Implementation of various initiatives under the Eat Right India movement in a focused manner.
- Any other matter consequential to ensuring food safety.

Progress of work under "Eat Right India" Program

Strengthening, Enforcement and Compliance

Increase in License and Registration/ Help Desk Setup
Inspection & Audits
Sampling and Testing of enforcement and surveillance samples

Capacity Building of FBOs

Eat Right Campus

Eat Right Schools

Clean Street Food Hub

Clean Fruit & Vegetable Market
BHOG

Hygiene Rating

Eat Right Station

Eat Right Millet Mela

Target Vs Progress

64 Registration Camps/Help Desks established against 108
93 High Risk Audits Done Against 100
1672 Enforcement Samples done against 2500, 368 Surveillance Samples done against 800
92 Training conducted by empanelled training partners at various location of state against 104
2 campuses Identified
All 11 Schools identified against 11
2 (in Tehri at Byasi & Agrakhali) identified and Audited against 5
2 Markets Identified against 4
2 Places Identified against 4
211 Certificate generated and 516 Audit done against 1000
2 Stations Identified against 5
1 Mela Conducted at Rishikesh and 2 Proposed at Srinagar and Haldwani

FUNDS EARMARKED FOR NATURAL FARMING, MILLETS REVIVAL PROGRAMME

Showing its commitment to promoting cow-based organic agriculture in the state, the UP government has allotted ₹113.52 crore under the National Mission on Natural Farming for 2023-24. It also earmarked ₹984.54 crore for National Agriculture Development Scheme, ₹753.70 crore for National Crop Insurance Scheme, ₹55.6 crore for the implementation of UP millets revival programme. The government has begun work on natural farming in 49 UP districts, including 26 along the banks of Ganga and all districts in Bundelkhand. Natural farming is proposed on 85,710 hectares of land spreading over 1714 clusters. The Cabinet has already cleared a proposal for setting up Uttar Pradesh Organic Board under the Chief Minister to take decisions with regard to promotion of cow-based natural farming in the state. A committee under the chief

₹1950 crore

for electricity supply at subsidised rates for pvt. tubewells of farmers

secretary will monitor the implementation of decisions. The move aims to enhance income of farmers, ridding agri products of toxins, apart from addressing the stray cattle problem. Funds of ₹56.60 crore have been allocated under the Uttar Pradesh Millets Revival Programme to promote cultivation and consumption of coarse grains (largely 'bajra') in the state. Though this budget is meant for 2023-24, the programme to promote millets in the state will be run till 2027. Coarse grains are cultivated in 53 of the 75 districts in UP. Their production this year was 19.5 lakh MT, of which around 90% was millets.

'ONE DISTRICT, ONE MEDICAL COLLEGE' FINDS PROMINENCE IN THE BUDGET

Giving push to its 'one district, one medical college' programme, the state government has provided ₹2,491.39 crore for establishing 14 new medical colleges and a new pharma research institute. The budget has ₹100 crore for treatment of chronic ailments. A total provision of ₹5,800 crore has been made for medical health and education under the schedule of new demands in the budget.

In all, 45 districts have a medical college, 14 have them under construction and in 16 districts medical colleges are to come up on public-private

partnership model.

Health sector has got focus in the budget. New medical colleges will come up and there will be medicine and other facilities for all patients at government hospitals.

Giving impetus to paramedical and nursing sector, a provision of ₹ 26 crore has been made for establishing new nursing colleges in autonomous medical colleges while upgrading district hospitals as medical colleges has also been given focus. The Uttar Pradesh institute of pharmaceutical research and development has got amount of Rs 20 crore.

Farm sector, infra push key in Punjab budget

Navneet Sharma

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CHANDIGARH: The Bhagwant Mann-led Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government in Punjab on Friday presented its budget for financial year 2023-24, with a focus on the farm sector and an infrastructure push in education and health.

While the government described the budget as continuing the priority to health and education sectors which are seen as cornerstones of the "AAP model of governance", the Opposition said "it sounds like a fairy tale" and claimed the government will soon drive the state deep into debt.

The Congress MLAs also staged a walk-out during finance minister Harpal Singh Cheema's two-and-a-half-hour long speech in the assembly.

From the macroeconomic perspective, the budget continues to highlight the state's precarious macroeconomic condition with a high fiscal deficit and rising debt-GSDP ratio.

Key takeaways

TOTAL OUTLAY ₹1,96,462 crore	
₹13,888cr Agriculture and allied sector	₹30cr Punjab Young Entrepreneur Programme to encourage Class 11 students to propose business ideas; govt to provide seed money of ₹2,000 per student
₹9,331cr Free power for farm sector	
₹17,072cr School and higher education	₹5,650cr Financial assistance to elderly, widows and destitute women, orphan children and handicapped persons
₹10,523cr Maintenance of law and order	

The Punjab government plans to spend ₹1.96 lakh crore in the fiscal year 2023-24, which is 26% higher than the ₹1.56 lakh crore which was announced in the 2022-23 budget estimates (BE). To be sure, the revised estimate (RE) numbers for 2022-23 show that the government will likely spend ₹1.87 lakh crore in the current

fiscal year.

Presenting the ₹1.96 lakh crore budget with no new taxes, finance minister Cheema announced an increase in allocation for agriculture and allied sectors to ₹13,888 crore along with a slew of new schemes such as a revolving fund for crop diversification, a market price risk mitigation

scheme for horticulture crops, crop insurance for farmers and solarisation of all diesel-based pump sets in next five years.

"Boosting the income of farmers and labourers through promotion of agriculture and allied activities is one of the central themes of the budget this year," the finance minister said.

The government also announced an increase of 12% in the outlay for education to raise it to ₹17,072 crore, he allocated ₹99 crore for creation of the post of "estate managers" for all government senior secondary schools for their upkeep so that teachers can concentrate only on academics.

In the health sector, the budget has been hiked by 11%. Cheema said that as against the initial target of establishing 117 "Aam Aadmi Clinics", the government set up 504, and 142 were in the pipeline.

"The budget sounds like a fairy tale," Bharatiya Janata Party general secretary Tarun Chugh said.

A big deal about Basmati

India sees it as the ultimate biryani and pulao rice. The world now sees it as a symbol of India. But the strain of rice is complicated and changing



VIR SANGHVI

The current Basmati boom is almost entirely due to the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, which successfully bred new, longer-grain, higher-yield strains.

It is the only kind of rice that is a household name all over India. Even people who don't eat much Basmati rice (in the South, for instance) know what it is. And all over the world, they praise Basmati for its fragrance (which is what the name Basmati refers to) and for its long grains, which remain separate when cooked.

Over the last two decades or so, Basmati has come to be regarded as the ultimate pulao or biryani rice. You can't really make a North Indian biryani without Basmati and the best pulaos are usually made with it.

The biryani connection has helped spread the fame of Basmati. As biryani has become one of India's most popular dishes, the demand for Basmati has multiplied. In Tamil Nadu, where there are many delicious local biryanis, all made with regional rice varieties, there is now a shift (in such cities as Chennai) to biryanis made with long-grain Basmati. In Andhra Pradesh, where the local pulaos (often called biryanis) were made with rice from the region, Basmati (used earlier only for Hyderabad biryani) has begun to replace regional short grain rice as the preferred pulao rice.

So firmly entrenched is the idea of Basmati as India's showpiece rice that we fought international battles to protect our Basmati heritage when companies all over

the world started growing their own Basmati. There was Basmati from Texas, and India feared, quite justifiably, that not only would we lose our claim to Basmati, but that the character of the rice itself would be corrupted by the new global varieties.

India waged a battle to obtain the coveted Geographical Indication status for Basmati. GI is conferred by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), which rules on whether countries can claim exclusive rights to a product. Just as France is the only country allowed to make Champagne (all other sparkling wine cannot be called Champagne), and only Italy can make Parmigiano cheese, so only India and Pakistan have right to call their rice Basmati.

I remember when India fought this battle, because many of us who wrote about food were asked by the eminent lawyer J. Sagar, who spearheaded India's legal strategy, to give affidavits about the uniqueness of our Basmati. And when Basmati was awarded GI status, all of us celebrated.

Two things have always intrigued me about Basmati, especially during its rise to even greater fame as the ultimate biryani rice. We were brought up to value Basmati for its fragrance. If you cook good-quality basmati rice, you will enjoy the aroma. But once you turn it into a biryani by adding spices, that original fragrance is lost in the

many aromas that waft up from the pot because of the spicing. In Awadhi cuisine, there is a tradition of adding extra aromatics (kewda and saffron, for instance) in a biryani, which further obscures the aroma.

So, I have always wondered: aAre we doing Basmati an injustice by treating it only as a biryani rice?

A second question was quickly answered once I began researching the subject. Why did rice described as Basmati vary so much in flavour and aroma?

The reason is that while Basmati is a distinct breed (with its own DNA), it is also a family of many entirely distinct varieties.

Though the term is often thrown around, there is no such thing as one traditional Basmati. Even a century ago, there were many varieties of Basmati. In some of them, the rice grains were not as long as today's Basmati. The distinctive factors were the flavour and aroma.

In any case, those ancient varieties of Basmati are hardly sold today. They were low yielding crops, susceptible to disease and rarely gave farmers a good return.

The current Basmati boom is almost entirely due to the Indian Agricultural Research Institute in Delhi, referred to by the trade as the Pusa Institute after its location. Over the last several years, scientists at Pusa have successfully bred new strains of Basmati that have higher yields, are easier to grow and even have longer grains.

Almost all of the Basmati we eat today has its origins in the labs at Pusa. The Institute's greatest achievement may be a variety called 1121, which is now the dominant Basmati strain. It has very long grains and has increased farmers' yields dramatically. As a consequence, 1121 rice is much cheaper than Basmati used to be. Though it was only released for commercial cultivation in this century it is what most of us are served when we ask for Basmati at restaurants. It does not have much fragrance. But as we have seen, most biryanis have so many added aromas anyway that nobody notices.

So Basmati is a complicated business, and while the GI tag has helped India globally, it has created another set of problems within the country. When we applied for GI registration, we described Basmati as a rice



Just as Champagne can only come from France, and Parmigiano cheese from Italy, the term Basmati can only be used for rice grown in India and Pakistan.

SHUTTERTOCK

grown in the Indo-Gangetic plain, which sounded good but may not have been strictly accurate. We named seven states as growers of Basmati and effectively said that any Basmati from elsewhere in India was not real Basmati.

This is problematic, because good-quality Basmati has always been grown outside of these seven states. In Pakistan, for instance, the GI region includes areas that are not in the Indo-Gangetic plain. Nor is there any ancient Basmati tradition in every one of the seven Indian states listed in the GI classification. Rice requires lots of water to flourish and Punjab and Haryana only got more water after the Bhakra-Nangal dam in the late 1950s. There was no real rice-growing (or eating) tradition in Punjab before that, and cultivation started in earnest only in the 1960s. Punjab now specialises in low-cost, high-yield varieties developed by Pusa.

It is also not clear that all of the areas designated under the GI classification are actually part of the Indo-Gangetic plain.

The major loser in all this is Madhya Pradesh. State government officials in Bhopal say that the region has a Basmati tradition dating back to over a century and furnish old records from 1908 which clearly refer to Basmati cultivation.

I spoke to farmers in the Bari region near Bhopal last week and they all insisted that they had been cultivating Basmati (they called it Sugandhi) for generations.

The Basmati they now grow is aromatic (much more than Pusa 1121) long-grained and probably of better quality than much of the rice coming out of say, Haryana or Punjab. When they were excluded from the GI classification, they went to Court and a seven-year legal battle ensued.

The current status is that they are allowed to call their rice Basmati (which it clearly is) nearly everywhere, pending a final resolution of the legal dispute. But they can't call it Basmati in the European market because the Indian government has told the EU that only rice from the seven states mentioned in the GI application is Basmati. This damages their export prospects and there is much anger among the farmers and within the local trade.

Why, they ask, can't the government tell the EU that the situation is under review and that MP is allowed to call its rice Basmati in India? Somewhat predictably they blame it on the stranglehold of the big rice companies which deal in rice from the North and do not want competition from Madhya Pradesh.

How this plays out is anyone's guess. An injustice has clearly been done to Madhya Pradesh's farmers and the Centre can easily rectify it. It would be a shame not to clarify the issue because the excellence of Basmati is a shared heritage for India and now that we have won the global battle we should not lose ourselves in internal squabbles.



Agri, health, education priority; Punjab FM presents ₹1.96 lakh crore Budget

No new tax imposed; ₹98,852 cr revenue target; estimated expenditure ₹1.23 lakh cr

Debt to swell to ₹3.47 lakh cr by March 2024, up from ₹3.12 lakh cr this fiscal

No mention of ₹1,000 monthly honorarium for women, Opposition stages walkout

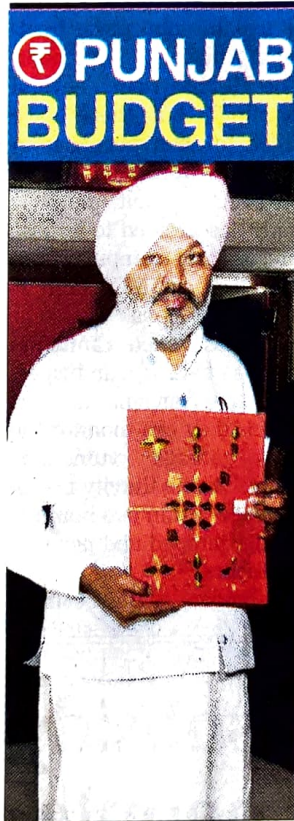
RUCHIKA M KHANNA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, MARCH 10

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Cheema today presented a Rs 1.96 lakh crore Budget for the financial year 2023-24 with focus mainly on agriculture, health, education and job generation.

Speaking in the Vidhan Sabha, Cheema said the total Budget size had been increased by 20 per cent to Rs 1,96,462.28 crore compared to the previous year's Rs 1,55,859.78 crore. Though no new tax has been imposed, the state government is targeting revenue receipts of Rs 98,852.13 crore even as the estimated expenditure is Rs 1,23,440 crore.

Cheema announced a crop insurance scheme, market price risk mitigation scheme for horticulture crops and setting up of five horticulture estates. To increase Punjab's green cover, there is a plan to establish micro and mini forests. Multi-purpose sports arenas are to come up at the district and sub-division levels. As many as 142 new Aam



KEY INDICATORS

Financial year	2022-23	2023-24
Revenue receipts	93,563.21	98,852.13
State's own tax revenue	44,139.86	51,835.49
State's non-tax revenue	6,052.92	7,823.99
Capital expenditure	25,871.34	28,021.37
Share of central taxes	17,163.65	18,457.57
Revenue expenditure	1,17,453.98	1,23,440.91
Revenue deficit	23,890.77	24,588.78
Debt servicing	36,046	38,626
Salary bill	33,027.77	34,620.26
Pension bill	17,200	18,000
Power subsidy	20,200	20,243.76

Outstanding debt 3,12,758.24 3,47,542.39
(ALL FIGURES IN RS CRORE)

117 'SCHOOLS OF EMINENCE'

One school in each Assembly seat to be upgraded to 'School of Eminence'. Pilot project underway in four schools of Amritsar district

NEW AAM AADMI CLINICS

142 new Aam Aadmi Clinics, part of AAP govt's flagship programme, to be set up across Punjab

PRICE RISK MITIGATION PLAN

5 horticulture estates | Schemes for crop insurance & market price risk mitigation for horticulture crops

ALLOCATION


₹20,717.17 cr
SOCIAL SERVICES


₹2,572.54 cr
AGRICULTURE


₹2,361.32 cr
RURAL DEVELOPMENT


₹2,259.41 cr
TRANSPORT

Counter-intelligence wing to be fortified

of Rs 24,588.78 crore, but we have not imposed any new tax. We propose to widen the tax net and plug loopholes in collection to mop up additional revenue. The Tax Intelligence Unit is being strengthened for better compliance. The SGST collections will increase, so will excise duty and stamp duty collections to help us increase our revenue receipts by Rs 5,288.92 crore compared to the current financial year," said the Finance Minister, who presented a paperless Budget.

He said within a year of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government assuming charge, Punjab's revenue receipts had increased by almost 20 per cent to Rs 15,394.90 crore, and that they had swapped several high interest loans with low interest ones.

The Opposition Congress, however, wasn't enthused. Its MLAs walked out of the House while the Budget was being presented as their point of order (on Rs 1,000 monthly honorarium for women) was not taken up.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

“Revenue growth has been robust, paving the way to usher in an era of development and fiscal consolidation... will plug loopholes to increase revenue. Harpal Cheema, FINANCE MINISTER

Aadmi Clinics are in the pipeline to give a fillip to the health sector. 'Schools of Emi-

nence' have been planned in each of the 117 Assembly constituencies while two new

medical and 11 other colleges have been proposed.

“There is a revenue deficit

Agri, health, education priority, Punjab FM...

To check tax evasion by traders and to mop up additional GST revenue, Cheema announced a scheme, "Bill Leyao Inam Pao". Customers will have to submit their bills for consumer durables and all GST covered items to the Taxation Department, which will organise a monthly draw and give away prizes. This will help the government get exact details of GST charged and how much of it was actually deposited.

The AAP government has reserved the largest chunk of outlay for social services (general education, housing, medical, public health, etc) at Rs

20,717.17 crore, followed by agriculture (Rs 2,572.54 crore), rural development (Rs 2,361.32 crore) and transport (Rs 2,259.41 crore). However, a major portion of the allocation would go towards payment of salaries (Rs 34,620.26 crore) and pensions (Rs 18,000 crore). This is 53% of the state's total revenue receipts for the next fiscal.

Other than this, Rs 38,626 crore would go towards servicing of the state's burgeoning public debt, which is set to swell to Rs 3,47,542.39 crore by March 2024. By the end of this fiscal, the state's debt will be Rs 3,12,758.24

crore, which shows that the AAP borrowed Rs 30,986 crore in its first year in office. In the next fiscal, the state will be borrowing Rs 34,784 crore, indicating the state's debt servicing would be higher than what the state would borrow in 2023-24.

Though the Treasury benches hailed the 300 units of free power to domestic consumers started by their government, the power subsidy has swelled to Rs 20,243.76 crore. This includes subsidy for domestic consumers at Rs 7,780 crore, agriculture pumpset consumers at Rs 9,331 crore and Rs 2,700

crore for industrial consumers. The government has also decided to carry the "legacy baggage" of free travel to women in state-owned buses and Rs 497 crore has been set aside for this.

Cheema said his government had this year paid back Rs 15,946 crore as principal and Rs 20,100 crore as interest on loans taken by previous governments. "In the next financial year, we will have to repay Rs 38,626 crore as principal and interest. Still, we have managed to create a huge corpus of Rs 3,000 crore in sinking fund to pay off debts or for emergency use," he added.

Mustard procurement to start from March 15

DEEPENDER DESWAL

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

HISAR, MARCH 10

As farmers are forced to resort to distress sale of mustard crop, the state government has decided to start procurement on the minimum support price (MSP) through Haryana State Co-operative Supply and Marketing Federation Limited (HAFED) from March 15 in the state.

Agriculture Minister Jai Prakash Dalal said here today that the state government had directed HAFED to purchase the mustard at the MSP of Rs 5,450 per quintal from March 15. The farmers were forced to sell their produce below the MSP as the prices of the crop had fallen in the open market.

While inaugurating the Krishi Vikas Mela at the Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agriculture University (HAU) today, the Agriculture Minister said the government was committed to the welfare of the farming community in the state.

"The government is taking a number of measures to make farming a profitable occupation. As part of the efforts, the state government is providing new varieties of seeds and fertilisers

THREE-DAY CATTLE FAIR FROM TODAY

The Agriculture Minister said a state-level cattle fair was being organised in Dadri from March 11 to 13 in which best-breed animals would be distributed prizes worth ₹60 lakh

to farmers and relief for the crop damage is being deposited into the bank accounts of the affected farmers. Besides, the water-logged agricultural land is being treated for transforming it as cultivable and a budget of Rs 1200 crore has been sanctioned for this purpose," he said.

The minister said the government had taken measures to create rainwater infrastructure for the drainage of the waters from the fields during the monsoon.

Dalal said the Atal Bhujal Yojana had been implemented for groundwater management, while micro irrigation was being promoted for judicious and better utilisation of irrigation water.

Dr Sumita Mishra, Additional Chief Secretary, Agriculture Department, said the Kisan Mela had been given a comprehensive format to increase the knowledge of the farmers.

Wholesale onion prices down 40% in four weeks

KARAM PRAKASH

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10

In the last one month, the wholesale prices of onions plummeted up to 40 per cent in the country, consequent upon which cultivators are either destroying the produce or burning the crop in the fields itself.

As per the price monitoring division of the Department of Consumers Affairs, the wholesale prices in Nashik (Maharashtra), the largest wholesale onion market in Asia, dropped from Rs 1,450 per quintal on February 1 to Rs 685 on February 28, a decline of 47 per cent.

In Chandigarh, the prices dropped from Rs 2,500 per quintal to Rs 1,450 during the same period. Ironically,

Little change in retail rate; farmers incur losses



unlike wholesale prices, the retail rates are witnessing only a slight drop.

As per the government data, onion was selling at Rs 23 per kg in Nashik, while farmers were getting Rs 14.50 per kg. The consumers were getting onion Rs 20 per kg on

February 28, when the wholesale prices dropped to Rs 6.85 per kg. Growers claimed they were selling their produce at Rs 3-6 per kg even as the consumers were getting it for Rs 27 per kg. In the national Capital, the retail prices of onion dropped only by Rs 3 between February 1 and 28.

Devinder Sharma, an agriculture expert, said the drastic decline in the wholesale prices had pushed the farmers into distress as they could not even recover the input cost. "This proves that only the middlemen are making money. Even in the organised sector, big online companies and retail outlets, which the government claims favour the end consumer, are selling onions between Rs 24 and Rs 35 per kg," said Sharma.

Supply down, stored apples fetch good price

SUBHASH RAJTA

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Unlike last year, stored apples are fetching good price in the market this year. According to people involved in the apple industry, reasons for better price this year vary from less storage to reduced import, disruption of supply from Turkey

Reasons: Imports down, supply from Turkey disrupted

due to earthquake to warmer winters that have enhanced the consumption of fruits.

"Last year, traders, commission agents and growers had



suffered big losses in stored apples. Most ended up losing money on stored apples. Stung by the losses, many opted not to store these this

year. As a result, the prices are much better this time," said NS Chaudhary, president, State Arhtiya Sangh. "Good quality apples this time are selling over Rs 2,500 per box. Last year, growers struggled to fetch Rs 1,600-1,700," he added. Substantiating Chaudhary's

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Supply down, stored..

claim, a grower from Baghi said that he did not store the fruit this time after suffering losses last year. "I used to store around 250-300 boxes, but this time, I sold the whole produce. I suffered losses last year and wasn't sure how the market would react this time," he said.

Bharat Justa, a Chandigarh-based arthiya, said reduced import this time has helped stored apples fetch "respectable prices". "Due to the losses suffered last year, importers and traders were quite restrained in importing apple this year. It has helped in keeping the market stable," said Justa. "The earthquake in Turkey, too, may have played a role in keeping the market stable," he

said, adding that the exact impact of the disaster is yet to be ascertained.

The Kashmiri growers are also getting good prices for their stored apples. Majid Wafai, president of J&K Cold Store Association, said the demand for local apple has held up well this time. "People wanted imported fruit for its colour and shine. Through controlled atmosphere (CA) stores, we have been able to match the appearance of imported fruit. Besides, our fruit has longer shelf life and taste. So, the consumers are showing more interest in apples from J&K and Himachal," said Wafai.

Meanwhile, the growers feel the warmer winters, too, have increased the demand for apple.

Land for tillers

Punjab must scrupulously enforce new land reform law

UNDER a new land reform law, around 11,200 landless tillers in Punjab who have been cultivating crops for generations will now get ownership rights of the respective pieces of land that they have been tilling — totalling over 4,000 acres — after paying due compensation to the owners. The transfer of land title in their names promises to empower these poor peasants who have remained socially and economically backward even though they have been toiling to ensure food on everybody's plates. Besides according them dignity, land proprietorship frees them from the money-lending sharks and arhtiyas as it gives them access to banks for loans and relief in case of any natural disaster. They will now also be eligible to get direct payment from the Punjab Government against foodgrain procurement.

All this has been made possible by the passage, though belated, of the Punjab Bhondedar, Butemar, Dohlidar, Insar Miadi, Mukarraridar, Mundhimar, Panahi Qadeem, Saunjidar or Taraddadkar (Vesting of Proprietary Rights) Bill, which has now received approval from President Murmu. It is a socialist way forward for the underprivileged cultivators, as envisaged by the framers of our Constitution who were keen to end the oppressive *zamindari* system. Despite the Land Ceiling Act trying to reduce landlords' powers, absentee farmers have continued to wield control over their lands in Punjab. In the absence of written tenancy or sharecropping agreements, the tenants have been denied their due rights. Unsurprisingly, there has been little improvement in the lot of the actual farmers. The debt traps that small and marginal tillers in the state routinely fall into and the suicides by them over the past few decades painfully underscore their plight. The new law offers a glimmer of hope for this hapless class.

Notably, J&K has fared well on this score with its historic Big Landed Estates Abolition Act, 1950, that enabled radical land redistribution, which, in turn, led to equitable rural prosperity in the 1950s. West Bengal and Kerala, too, have enforced agrarian laws to end feudalism and empower land tenants since the 1970s. Punjab must also ensure it now.