AGRO CHEM FEDERATION OF INDIA

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NEWS

Agri min Chouhan reviews progress of monsoon

UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTER Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday reviewed the progress of southwest monsoon and directed officials to provide timely farm advisories and maintain better coordination with states to tackle the potential impact of El Nino on kharif crops. The government is on “alert mode”, Chouhan said, asking officials to maintain constant check on monsoon status.

“Ensure better coordination with states and take prompt action,” Chouhan told officials in the meeting.

He also asked them to provide timely advisories and essential assistance to farmers, an official statement said.

Measures to safeguard farmers’ interests and mitigate the impact on kharif crops were discussed in detail, it said.

Officials from all departments and agencies concerned were present in the meeting. —PTI

India-Oman trade pact to unlock export opportunities: Experts

BOOST TO TRADE TIES

- India and Oman CEPA came into force from June 1
- The agreement aims to boost exports from $4.06 bn to $6 bn
- Oman offered zero-duty access on 98.08% of India's export goods
- India offered tariff liberalisation on 77.79% of Oman's exports

India, Oman CEPA builds a durable framework across goods, services, mobility and investment: Report

NEW DELHI

INDIA-Oman free trade agreement has opened huge export opportunities for domestic labour-intensive and value-added sectors such as textiles, gems and jewellery and marine products, experts say.

Beyond goods, the comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) also sets the architecture for deeper services and mobility linkages, they said.

The pact was operationalised on June 1. "Taken together, the CEPA does not merely lower tariffs; it builds a durable framework across goods, services, mobility and investment that should support a sustained step-up in bilateral commerce over the medium-term," Gulzar Didwania, Partner, Deloitte India, said. He said that the most strategic dimension of the India–Oman CEPA is its contribution to India's energy security and supply-chain resilience. India remains a net importer of crude from Oman, with crude imports rising from around $ 0.1 billion in 2006 to $ 3.6 billion in 2022. The country has simultaneously built a meaningful export corridor in refined petroleum products, which peaked at $ 2.2 billion in 2022 before moderating to $ 1.3 billion in 2024.

"That two-way structure reinforces the CEPA's relevance. It brings a more predictable framework to a relationship that is already commercially significant on both sides of the energy ledger and provides for a long-term trade strategy for the Gulf region," Didwania said.

Sanjay Budhia, Co-Chair, CII National Committee on Exports and Managing Director, Patton International Ltd, said the agreement will help boost bilateral trade relations.

"This agreement encompasses trade, investment, services, professional mobility, and regulatory cooperation, creating new opportunities for businesses in both countries," Budhia said.

India has secured duty-free market access across 98.08 per cent of Oman's tariff lines, covering 99.38 per cent of India's export value, a substantial improvement from the pre-CEPA position, where only around 15 per cent of Indian exports entered Oman duty-free.

"That step-change opens commercially meaningful corridors for India's labour-intensive and value-added sectors, textiles, gems and jewellery, marine products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, processed foods and chemicals, many of which directly support MSMEs and employment-intensive manufacturing," Didwania added.

Apeda to park non-basmati fee in FDs

Our Bureau
New Delhi

An internal committee under the Non-Basmati Rice Development Fund (NBDF), managed by agri-export promotion body Apeda, has decided to invest funds exceeding ₹1 crore in term deposits after accounting for taxes and administrative charges, even though the corpus was created primarily to promote non-basmati rice exports.

Between September 25, 2025, and April 30, 2026, Apeda collected ₹9.66 crore from non-basmati rice exporters through the mandatory contract registration fee, official sources said.

The Department of Commerce (DoC) approved the establishment of the NBDF in July 2025.

The fund is overseen by a committee chaired by the Apeda Chairman and comprises eight members, including three industry representatives.

However, the operational guidelines were approved only in September, when the collection of the registration fee came into effect.

Under the approved framework, Apeda is entitled to retain 30 per cent of the collections from the registration fee, which is levied at ₹9.44 per tonne, including 18 per cent GST.

CORPUS BUILDS UP

At the second meeting of the NBDF committee held last month, Apeda's internal auditor presented the fund position.

According to sources, Apeda had issued registration-cum-allocation certificates (RCACs) covering exports of around 10.23 million tonnes of non-basmati rice and collected ₹9.66 crore in registration fees up to April 30. After accounting for taxes, service charges and infrastructure expenses payable to Apeda, industry sources estimate that about ₹5-6 crore is available for developmental and promotional activities.

An Internal Investment Committee has now resolved that any amount in the NBDF account exceeding ₹1 crore will be invested in term deposits in multiples of ₹50 lakh on a periodic basis.

PROMOTION MANDATE

Government guidelines stipulate that 70 per cent share of the registration fee earmarked for the NBDF should be used for promotional activities, as well as for salaries and administrative expenses.

While industry representatives on the NBDF panel supported the decision, some exporters have questioned the move.

Agri ministry to promote drought-resistant crops amid weaker monsoon fears

Harikishan Sharma
New Delhi, June 3

WITH THE Union Agriculture Ministry stepping up preparations to tackle the challenges of a potentially weak southwest monsoon rainfall triggered by the El Nino conditions, several Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) have emerged as torchbearers of promoting drought-resistant crops and climate-resilient farm practices.

According to officials, the ministry has prepared a list of FPOs which are cultivating drought-resistant crops like millets and are using climate-resilient farm practices including mulching for moisture conservation, drip irrigation and mixed cropping system. The ministry has been holding webinars to promote natural farming everyday in one state and is now planning to host a series of webinars in the coming days to promote climate-resilient farm practices like mulching for moisture conservation, the officials said.

Over 63 lakh farmers are members of 10,000 FPOs across the country and the ministry plans to use their network to reach out to farmers to adopt climate-resilient practices to counter the challenges of weak monsoon, added the officials.

"Promoting mulching for moisture conservation is one of the simplest and most effective ways. By covering the soil surface with crop residues or other organic materials, evaporation losses can be reduced significantly, while it also suppresses weeds and improves soil health," said an official.

The FPOs such as Torpa Mahila Krishi Bagwani Swawlambi Sahkari Samiti Limited and Senem Nirem Farmer Producer Company Limited in Jharkhand have adopted natural mulching using straw and gunny bags.

"These low-cost interventions help retain moisture in the soil for longer periods, enabling crops to withstand dry spells more effectively," said the official.

Speaking to The Indian Express over phone, Etwary Devi, director of Torpa Mahila Sahkari Samiti based in Khunti district of Jharkhand, said that members of her FPO are planning to sow pulses and millets. The samiti has about 4,000 members.

A member of the Senem Nirem Farmer Producer Company Limited in Jharkhand. AGRICULTURE MINISTRY

According to Devi, most of these farmers used to plant paddy during kharif season but this year, they are planning to opt for pulses including moon, urad and kulthi (horse gram) and ragi, which requires less water.

They are also encouraging other farmers to plant crops which require less water, Devi said.

Devi, s an acre of land and takes farm land on lease, has been using mulching for moisture conservation. Mulching, using straw and old gunny bags, helps saving water and also prevents weeds, she said.

The move to shift from paddy to millet crops in Jharkhand is significant as the state is located in the Monsoon Core Zone (MCZ) consisting of most of the rainfed agriculture areas in the country.

Apart from Jharkhand, the MCZ consists mainly — Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Telangana and Odisha.

The officials said promoting drought-resistant crops can help farmers reduce production risks under uncertain rainfall conditions.

Millets, in particular, are naturally resilient, require less water, and can perform well in marginal environments where other crops may struggle, said an official, adding that an encouraging example comes from MVM Baghima Palkot Farmer Producer Company Limited, Jharkhand, which is promoting millet cultivation among its members.

According to the IMD, the monsoon (June-September) rainfall for the country as a whole during 2026 is likely to be 90 per cent of the Long Period Average (LPA) with a model error of ± 4%. The LPA of the seasonal rainfall over the country as a whole based on data of 1971-2020 is 87 cm.

The southwest monsoon seasonal rainfall over the Monsoon Core Zone (MCZ) consisting of most of the rainfed agriculture areas in the country is most likely to be below normal (<94% of LPA).

NO SIGN OF PRICE DIP, DOMESTIC PRODUCTION BEING RAMPED UP

Fertiliser subsidy burden set to double on global supply crunch

PSUs float tenders for imports, Govt plans to tap Russia to meet demand

Siddharth Upasani & Aanchal Magazine
New Delhi, June 9

RISING GLOBAL costs of fertilisers amid a supply crunch is likely to result in a subsidy burden of almost Rs 3.4 lakh crore, or an almost 100 per cent increase compared with the Budget estimate of Rs 1.7 lakh crore, according to top government sources.

"We are still selling fertiliser at a subsidised price of around

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

• Fertiliser subsidy

Figures in Rs crore

FY26 IS REVISED ESTIMATE, FY27 BUDGET ESTIMATE; SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS

Congestion at ports, exporters flag carriers' 'opportunistic pricing'

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, June 9

AMID LOGISTICAL disruption due to the West Asia crisis, Indian exporters are grappling with mounting financial burden posed by "opportunistic" pricing practices by foreign shipping lines and "non-transparent" imposition of detention, demurrage charges

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

E. EXPLAINED

The Hormuz fallout

The near closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran and the US naval blockade has led to congestion at ports on India's western seaboard and sent freight costs soaring, severely impacting exporters and their margins.

Agri ministry's FY27 budget fivefold jump from 2013-14

NEW DELHI, June 10: The Narendra Modi-government has increased the annual budget for the agriculture ministry by fivefold in the last 12 years to Rs 1.4 lakh crore for the current fiscal as part of its efforts to boost the farm sector and enhance farmers' income.

According to a booklet released by the government to mark Modi's tenure as India's longest-serving Prime Minister, the budget for the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare is Rs 1.4 lakh crore for 2026-27 fiscal as against Rs 27,663 crore in 2013-14.

The booklet, titled 'Public Service is the Resolve', highlighted the initiatives taken by the government in the last 12 years for farmers' welfare. Listing out the achievements, the government said 3,000 climate-resistant crop varieties have been released between 2014 and 2025. Nearly 26 crore soil health cards have been issued, helping farmers to use fertilisers in an efficient manner.

The Centre has distributed a whopping Rs 4.3 lakh crore to farmers under PM-KISAN. Under this scheme that was launched in February 2019, the government provides Rs 6,000 to eligible farmers annually in three equal instalments.

To protect farmers' interest, the total fertiliser subsidy has been enhanced to Rs 2.21 lakh crore in 2024-25 from Rs 75,000 crore in 2014-15. On urea, the subsidy is 90 per cent, with the retail price being just Rs 266 per bag (45kg) compared to the actual price of Rs 2,200 per bag.

These steps have resulted in record foodgrain production of 3,577 lakh tonnes in 2024-25.

The government has procured crops, primarily wheat and paddy, at minimum support price (MSP) worth more than Rs 26 lakh crore in the last 12 years. This has protected farmers from fluctuating market prices.

The Centre also noted that the agriculture exports stood at Rs 5 lakh crore last fiscal, registering an increase of 37 per cent from the 2013-14 level.

Under the PM Fasal Bima Yojana, the booklet said that 63 per cent of farmers covered in this crop insurance scheme are from the SC/ST and OBC categories. – PTI

Interim India-US trade pact near, yet risks persist

INDIA and the United States have moved closer to sealing an interim trade agreement after four days of negotiations in New Delhi.

At the same time, the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) is reviewing a separate proposal that could affect imports from India and several major trading partners. The USTR has completed investigations involving 60 economies and proposed additional tariffs under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974. The proposal is linked to concerns over imports of goods allegedly connected to forced labour.

Under the proposal, economies that have adopted restrictions on such imports could face tariffs of 10 per cent, while countries that have not implemented similar measures could face duties of up to 12.5 per cent.

India, China, Japan, South Korea, the United Kingdom, Bangladesh, Vietnam and several other economies are included in the review.

However, the proposed tariffs are not yet final. Stakeholders have until June 22 to request participation in hearings. Written comments can be submitted until July 6, while hearings are scheduled for July 7. The USTR will review all submissions before making a final decision.

US goods trade with India totalled an estimated $149.4 billion in 2025. US goods exports to India stood at $45.6 billion, up 9.8 per cent ($4.1 billion) from 2024. US goods imports from India reached $103.8 billion, up 18.9 per cent ($16.5 billion) from the previous year. The US goods trade deficit with India widened to $58.2 billion in 2025, a 27.1 per cent increase ($12.4 billion) over 2024.

Total US services trade with India amounted to an estimated $83.4 billion in 2024. US services exports to India were valued at $41.8 billion, up 15.9 per cent ($5.7 billion) from 2023, while services imports from India stood at $41.6 billion, up 15.4 per cent ($5.6 billion). The US services trade surplus with India was $102 million in 2024, compared with a services trade deficit of $76 million in 2023.

India's commitment to purchase $500 billion worth of US goods over the next five years is a key component of the proposed interim trade deal.

India maintains that the agreement protects its sensitive dairy and agricultural sectors while opening access to a $30 trillion market for Indian exporters.

Washington and New Delhi have set a target of increasing bilateral trade to $500 billion by 2030 and have held multiple rounds of negotiations since March to resolve market-access and tariff-related issues.

In exchange for several concessions by India, Washington had agreed to lower its proposed reciprocal tariff on Indian exports from 25 per cent to around 18 per cent.

However, the foundation of that arrangement was shaken on February 20 when the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the legal basis for the Trump administration's reciprocal tariffs was invalid.

The ruling effectively dismantled the tariff-based framework around which a new generation of US trade agreements had been negotiated.

Despite this, there are growing indications that the first phase of the India-US trade deal is nearing completion. Discussions are now focused on final details before the first tranche of the agreement can be announced.

An 18 per cent tariff rate would still represent a relatively favourable outcome for India. If higher American tariffs become a long-term reality, relative competitiveness will matter most. India would enjoy a lower tariff burden than several ASEAN economies, giving Indian exporters a potential advantage in the US market.

Tariff Reboot

President Donald Trump's trade policy has acquired a second life. After the US Supreme Court curtailed key elements of the architecture that defined much of his economic agenda, the White House has returned with a familiar instrument wrapped in a different justification. This time, the target is not trade deficits, national security or industrial revival, but the global persistence of forced labour.

The argument is politically attractive and difficult to oppose. Few governments will publicly defend products tainted by coercive labour practices. Yet the significance of Washington's latest tariff proposal lies less in the moral language surrounding it than in what it reveals about the direction of American trade policy. The United States is increasingly moving away from the post-Cold War assumption that trade should be governed primarily by efficiency and market access. Instead, trade is being redefined as an extension of strategic policy. Human rights, labour standards, national security, supply-chain resilience and geopolitical competition are becoming intertwined. Tariffs are no longer merely economic tools; they are instruments of leverage.

The breadth of the proposed measures is particularly telling. When allies such as Britain, Canada, Japan and the European Union find themselves in the same category as strategic competitors, the issue is no longer about a handful of offending countries. It becomes a statement that Washington intends to judge not only what enters its market but also how its trading partners regulate their own commercial relationships.

Such an approach carries risks. The United States has long criticised other nations for using trade barriers in ways that distort commerce. If tariffs become the default response to disagreements over labour standards, environmental rules or supply-chain governance, other countries may adopt similar methods. The result could be a fragmented trading system in which competing blocs increasingly impose their domestic priorities on one another through economic coercion.

For India, the development deserves careful attention. New Delhi has already faced tariff threats linked to market access, digital regulation and Russian oil imports. The latest proposal suggests that future trade disputes may emerge from an expanding range of policy concerns. If labour practices in third-country supply chains can become grounds for tariffs, the scope for economic friction widens considerably.

At the same time, the proposal highlights a broader reality. The era when globalisation was viewed as a self-sustaining process is ending. Major powers are reasserting political control over trade at the expense of predictability. Businesses that built supply chains around assumptions of stable market access must now factor in geopolitical risk as carefully as they once calculated labour costs or shipping times.

The real story is therefore not the tariff rate itself. It is the emergence of a new idiosyncrasy: a doctrine in which access to the American market is conditioned on compliance with Washington's economic and political priorities. Whether one supports or opposes that approach, it marks another step away from the rules-based trading order that shaped the world economy for decades.

Adopt organic farming: Min urges farmers

Alwar: Union minister of state for agriculture and farmers' welfare Ramnath Thakur urged farmers to reduce excessive use of chemical fertilisers and adopt organic and natural farming practices, warning that indiscriminate use of chemicals was harming both soil health and human health. He was addressing a farmers' seminar Wednesday in Bagad Rajput village in Alwar district under the Swasth Mitti, Sashakt Kisan aur Samridh Bharat Abhiyan and Khet Bachao Abhiyan. He said balanced use of fertilisers and greater reliance on organic alternatives could improve crop yields. TNN

Indore hosts key BRICS agriculture dialogue on farmers, food and innovation

Discussions to focus on research partnerships, trade cooperation and sustainable agricultural practices

BHOPAL/INDORE

MADHYA Pradesh is set to shine on the global stage as Indore hosts the prestigious "BRICS Agriculture Working Group" meeting and the Agriculture Ministers' conference from June 9 to 13 under India's presidency of the grouping.

Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan, addressing a press conference in Bhopal, described the event as a proud moment for India and Madhya Pradesh.

The meetings will deliberate on critical global issues, including food security, sustainable agriculture, empowerment of small and marginal farmers, and agricultural innovation.

The BRICS Agricultural Research Platform, set up in 2016 during India's presidency, will further strengthen research and technical cooperation.

The schedule includes official-level meetings from June 9 to 11, followed by the Agriculture Ministers' meeting on June 12 and 13, culminating in a joint declaration. Delegates will also experience Indore and Madhya Pradesh's rich cultural heritage through visits to landmarks like Rajwada, 56 Dukan, and Mandu.

BRICS nations command significant influence in world agriculture, accounting for 42 per cent of global agricultural land and over 42 per cent of agricultural production. Nearly 70 per cent of the world's 580 million farmers — mostly small and marginal — live in BRICS countries, making the bloc's agricultural dialogue vital for global food security.

Chouhan outlined four key priorities for the Agriculture Working Group -- food security and nutrition, agricultural trade and cooperation, climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture, and partnerships in innovation and research. A special session on the theme "Future Food Security through Women and Youth" will be held on June 12, recognising the critical role of women in the agricultural workforce and youth in adopting new technologies.

The minister highlighted challenges such as climate change, erratic weather, food waste (nearly one billion tonnes annually), and limited resources for small farmers. Discussions will focus on regenerative farming, improving storage and supply chains, strengthening market connectivity, and promoting allied sectors like animal husbandry and fisheries to boost farmers' incomes. India has generated 9.80 crore farmer IDs and expanded the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund to Rs 2 lakh crore for better post-harvest infrastructure.

Coromandel, Samunnati tie up for agri-input access

Chennai: Coromandel International has signed a memorandum of understanding with Samunnati Agri Value Chain Solutions to enable the supply, promotion and distribution of agri-inputs to farmer producer oganisations. The MoU aims to strengthen market access by harnessing Samunnati's extensive FPO network and Coromandel's expertise in crop nutrition, crop protection and agri services. OUR BUREAU

Wheels turn for $10 billion US tariff refunds to India

MONEY TRAIL. RBI eases banking hurdles; digital payment providers offer alternative channels

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

The process of repatriating more than $10 billion in US reciprocal tariff refunds to Indian exporters has begun, following detailed administrative guidelines issued by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and a key clarification from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) aimed at facilitating the inflows.

Cross-border digital payment providers have also entered the fray, offering exporters mechanisms to receive refunds without opening foreign bank accounts and at significantly lower costs than traditional commercial banking channels, a source familiar with the developments told *businessline*.

TARIFF FALLOUT. The refunds arise from tariffs levied under a US enforcement initiative launched in April 2025, targeting countries with large trade surpluses with that country

PAYOUT PROCESS

However, exporters that paid the duties through freight forwarders face an additional complication. Since the forwarders acted as the legal importer on record, they will receive the refunds directly from the US Treasury and will subsequently have to transfer the funds to the exporters in compliance with applicable regulations. The operational details of this process are still being worked out, the source said.

In cases where duties were paid directly by US importers, the refunds will be credited to the importing entities. Given that many Indian exporters had initially offered substantial discounts to share the tariff burden, industry expectations are that the refunds will also be shared. "The mechanics of how the two parties divide the refunds will vary on a case-by-case basis," the source noted.

"The systems are now falling into place. Delays occurred because the US Customs took time to issue the necessary administrative guidelines. With those now in place, some smaller remittances have already been processed. However, larger payouts have not yet begun and are expected to be released gradually," the source added.

COURT REPRIEVE

The refunds arise from a broad trade enforcement action launched by Washington in April 2025 under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), targeting countries running trade surpluses with the US. India faced a 50 per cent tariff on key exports after Washington imposed a 25 per cent reciprocal duty on August 7, 2025, and a further 25 per cent levy on August 27 over Russian oil imports. The US Supreme Court struck down the tariffs as unconstitutional on February 20, 2026.

"According to various estimates, more than $10 billion in refunds are due on Indian exports shipped between August 2025 and February 2026," the source said.

To address banking bottlenecks, the RBI has clarified that Indian banks without direct US correspondent banking relationships can establish specialised collection accounts through banks that maintain operational branches in the US. "Some domestic banks do not have correspondent banking arrangements or branches in the US, creating uncertainty over where the refunds could be received. The RBI's clarification resolves this issue," the source said, adding that detailed procedures are now being communicated to exporters.

Must move surplus labour out of agri, says NITI V-C

SANJEEB MUKHERJEE
New Delhi, 10 June

India must focus on moving surplus labour out of agriculture into industry, services, and other productive sectors in the medium- to long-term, create efficient markets for farmers, and gradually replace commodity-linked subsidies with direct income transfers if it wants to address the structural challenges facing the farm sector, Ashok Lahiri, vice-chairman of NITI Aayog, said on Wednesday.

"Agriculture and allied sectors contribute roughly one-sixth of India's GDP, while almost half of the population depends on the sector for its livelihood. If half the population depends on one-sixth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), distress is inevitable. The medium- to long-term solution is to move surplus labour out of agriculture and into industry, services, and other productive sectors," Lahiri said while speaking at the launch of a book, "*Getting Agriculture Markets Right*", written by Distinguished Professor at the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) and agriculture economist, Ashok Gulati, ICRIER fellow Raya Das and Chief Economist, NSE, Dr Tirthankar Patnaik.

Lahiri also questioned the continued reliance on subsidies and argued in favour of direct cash transfers but also accepted that it is easier said than done.

"Most economists would agree that transfers are a better mechanism than subsidies. However, transfers pose a political challenge. If a person receives 35 kg of rice every month and rice prices rise, the value of that support automatically increases. But if support is given in cash, beneficiaries may worry that the government will not increase the transfer amount when prices rise. Therefore, shifting from subsidies to transfers is easier said than done," Lahiri said.

On the form of government support, Lahiri cited the example of sectors such as poultry, fisheries, and dairy to underscore the point that there are sectors in farming, which has grown without government's active support in the form of MSPs.

"India's White Revolution is a classic example. Even today, chicken prices have remained remarkably stable over long periods compared with many other food commodities. This raises an important question: Is government support necessary? My answer is that some intervention is certainly needed, but we must carefully consider its form," he said.

Ashok Lahiri, NITI Aayog V-C, questioned the continued reliance on subsidies and argued in favour of direct cash transfers

He also raised concerns over the distortionary effects of the minimum support price (MSP) regime.

Citing findings from the book, he noted that fewer than 10 per cent of farmers and less than 10 per cent of the gross value of agricultural output directly benefit from MSP operations. Yet the policy continues to shape cropping decisions across large parts of the country.

Procurement remains heavily concentrated in wheat and rice, which account for nearly 78 per cent of the total procurement value. The expansion of procurement into states such as Telangana, Chhattisgarh and Odisha has encouraged cultivation of water-intensive cereals while discouraging diversification towards pulses and oilseeds, he said.

In his address, the NITI Aayog Vice chairman also argued that the MSP system was designed in an era of food scarcity when India depended on imports and needed strong incentives to boost grain production.

However, the country has since moved from shortages to surpluses, making the fiscal and environmental costs of the current system increasingly difficult to justify.

"By the early 1970s, economists were already warning that linking prices mechanically to costs of cultivation would distort resource allocation. Dharam Narain also cautioned that exporting wheat at prices above international levels would require substantial subsidies and that indefinitely accumulating stocks would be both costly and impractical. Unfortunately, that is exactly what happened," Lahiri said in his address.

Drawing from his on-field experience as public representative from Balurghat in West Bengal, Lahiri said that in many rural areas, markets simply do not exist, particularly for small farmers, self-help groups and farmer producer organisations.

On the political need to keep raising the MSPs of crops that are grown in abundance. Lahiri said that with rising literacy and awareness, it should be possible to explain (to farmers) that unsustainable policies cannot continue indefinitely.

More on business-standard.com

BRICS countries issue Indore Declaration, announce steps to promote agri cooperation

INDORE, June 13: The BRICS countries on Saturday issued the 'Indore Declaration' at the end of a five-day meeting held here under India's presidency, affirming their commitment to strengthen agricultural cooperation and announcing joint initiatives such as a forum to protect farmers' rights in seed systems.

The member countries agreed on several new institutional mechanisms and India will be coordinating many of the initiatives, said Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan.

Agriculture ministers and officials of the BRICS nations participated in the meeting.

According to the Indore Declaration, the member countries reaffirmed their shared commitment to strengthening food and nutrition security, improving the livelihoods of small and marginal farmers, increasing the participation of women and youth in agriculture, promoting climate-resilient and sustainable farming, and enhancing cooperation in agricultural trade and investment, Chouhan said.

The member countries also reiterated their commitment to a "fair, inclusive and transparent" multilateral trading system and discussed measures to facilitate agricultural trade, he told reporters.

Among other things, Chouhan said, the BRICS nations agreed to establish a 'Global Forum on Farmers' Rights in Seed Systems' to promote farmers' rights and preserve traditional knowledge associated with seed systems.

"India will coordinate this initiative," he said.

The forum would promote farmers' seed rights, conservation of indigenous seed diversity and preservation of traditional agricultural knowledge, the minister said.

The member countries also agreed to create the BRICS AGRIN Network to facilitate cooperation in agricultural inputs, genetic resources and information-sharing, he said. India would serve as the coordinating country for this network as well, Chouhan added.

The network will facilitate the exchange of agricultural resources, technical information and best practices.

The grouping further decided to continue discussions on operationalising the proposed 'BRICS Grain Exchange', an initiative aimed at strengthening foodgrain trade and supply chains among member countries, Chouhan said.

The initiative could help strengthen foodgrain trade, market linkages and supply chains among member countries, he added.

In view of the challenges posed by climate change, the BRICS nations agreed to establish a 'BRICS Centres of Excellence Network' in agroecology and regenerative agriculture, he said.

The initial coordination for this will be the responsibility of the Indian Institute of Farming Systems Research, Modipuram, under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), Chouhan said.

The member countries also endorsed the creation of a Digital Agriculture Network to promote the use of artificial intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), geospatial technologies and other digital solutions in agriculture, the minister said.

The network's initial coordination will be handled by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi.

Chouhan said the member countries also agreed to further strengthen the BRICS Agricultural Research Platform and develop it into a 'Knowledge to Action Hub' so that the outcomes of research can reach farmers more quickly.

The initiatives were aimed at empowering small and marginal farmers, strengthening food security and making agriculture more sustainable and resilient, according to Chouhan.

Around 100 delegates, including nearly 60 foreign representatives from member and partner countries, participated in the meetings held over five days.

Chouhan said the decisions taken during the meeting reflected the shared commitment of BRICS nations to enhance cooperation in agriculture and address common challenges through innovation, technology and knowledge-sharing.

BRICS countries represent nearly half of the world's population, account for about 42 per cent of global agricultural land and contribute roughly 42 per cent of global foodgrain production, he noted.

Increased cooperation among these countries in the agriculture sector could play an important role in strengthening global food security, Chouhan added.

BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In addition to these five countries, the bloc now has six more members — Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Indonesia. —PTI

Corteva rolls out Mavilon for pest management in rice

Our Bureau
Bengaluru

Corteva has introduced Mavilon, a granular insecticide for pest management in rice cultivation in India.

Rice, a daily staple and a cornerstone of India's agricultural economy, faces persistent threats from pests such as Brown Planthopper (BPH) and stem borer, which can cause significant yield losses and reduce grain quality.

Farmers often tackle these pests only after infestations become visible, a reactive approach that can limit effectiveness.

Delayed detection frequently allows the damage to progress before corrective action is taken.

Labour shortages during peak farming periods and reliance on rain-free windows for spraying further add to the operational challenges at critical stages of the crop cycle.

GRANULAR FORMULA

Applied once, 30-35 days after transplanting, Mavilon is designed to protect the crop before visible damage occurs. According to the company, its granular formulation provides up to 60 days of control against BPH and up to 15 days against stem borer, helping safeguard the crop during key yield-forming stages.

By enabling early intervention, Mavilon allows farmers to stay ahead of pest pressure rather than respond after the damage has begun.

Beyond crop protection, Mavilon aims to reduce dependence on repeated foliar sprays, lowering operational complexity and minimising the need for last-minute interventions.

This can help farmers improve efficiency while achieving more predictable outcomes each season.

Mavilon reinforces Corteva's commitment to delivering science-based and sustainable crop protection solutions that support crop health and enhance grower profitability across India, the company said.

CIBA scientists from Chennai develop soil-friendly fertilizers from fish waste

B. Kolappan
CHENNAI

Scientists at the Chennai-based ICAR-Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture (CIBA) have developed an innovative fish waste-based biofertilizer technology that offers a sustainable and economically viable alternative to conventional fertilizers.

The institute has developed two novel products – CIBA-PlanktonPlus and CIBA-HortiPlus – derived entirely from fish waste.

"These products represent a win-win solution by addressing the twin challenges of scientific fish waste disposal and the growing need for eco-friendly nutrient sources that enhance soil fertility and agricultural productivity," Kuldeep K. Lal, Director of the ICAR-CIBA, said.

The scientists said India produces nearly 195 lakh tonnes of fish annually, generating more than 60 lakh tonnes of fish waste. They estimate this untapped resource has the potential to yield approximately 48 lakh tonnes of CIBA-PlanktonPlus and 3 lakh tonnes of CIBA-HortiPlus every year, transforming a major environmental burden into a valuable agricultural input.

CIBA-PlanktonPlus is derived entirely from fish market waste.

Dr. Lal said on-farm trials done across Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Gujarat, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha demonstrated the benefits of CIBA-PlanktonPlus in aquaculture.

Application of the product in fish and shrimp ponds enhanced production by 0.6-0.8 tonnes per hectare, improved survival rates by 10% to 15%, and reduced feed requirements by 20% to 50%, he said.

Improved productivity

The biofertilizer has also shown promising results in agriculture. Field trials on paddy and vegetable crops recorded substantial reductions in chemical fertilizer use without compromising productivity.

The second product, CIBA-HortiPlus, is a nutrient-rich organic manure developed from processed fish waste. Application of 1.5 to 2 tonnes per hectare increased potato yields by up to 23.8% and effectively replaced 100-150 kg of DAP fertilizer per hectare. It also improved soil fertility and enhanced the mineral content of crops.

Debasis De, Principal Scientist at the ICAR-CIBA, who led the scientific team behind the innovation, said the products not only improve crop productivity but also contribute to restoring soil health and reducing dependence on chemical fertilizers.

To facilitate large-scale dissemination, the ICAR-CIBA has initiated capacity-building programmes for coastal fisher self-help groups, fish farmer producer organisations, and entrepreneurs. Production units have already been established in several States, including West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, generating job opportunities while supporting the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Mission through improved fish waste management.

Dr. De said ICAR-CIBA's "Waste-to-Wealth" innovation stands out as a model of scientific ingenuity that benefits farmers, fishers, consumers, and the environment alike.

535 Rajasthan farmers die from pesticide exposure in two years

Shoeb.Khan@timesofindia.com

Bikaner recorded the highest toll at 57 deaths, followed by Churu (56), Hanumangarh (42) and Jhalawar (42). Jodhpur reported 38 deaths, while Sriganganagar and Beawar recorded 31 each

With the rise of chemical-intensive farming in Rajasthan, 535 farmers have died from pesticide exposure while working in fields between Jan 2024 and Jan 2026, as per the records tabled in the state's assembly. In this period, 189 samples of substandard pesticides were also found.

Bikaner recorded the highest toll at 57 deaths, followed by Churu (56), Hanumangarh (42) and Jhalawar (42). Jodhpur reported 38 deaths, while Sriganganagar and Beawar recorded 31 each.

During the period, Rs 5.1 crore was paid as compensation to affected families by the state govt, though payouts varied sharply across districts and exposed gaps between deaths reported and claims cleared.

Bikaner received Rs 92 lakh in compensation, Churu Rs 72 lakh, Jodhpur Rs 58 lakh and Hanumangarh Rs 48 lakh. Sriganganagar received Rs 18 lakh. Jhalawar, despite reporting 42 deaths, also received only Rs 18 lakh. Deeg reported eight deaths but no compensation, while Kota reported 11 deaths and received Rs 2 lakh.

Officials attributed disparities to claim verification and approval processes. Agriculture department records did not specify the exact cause of each death. Data covered fatalities linked to agricultural work involving pesticide use and included only cases reported and verified by authorities.

"If hundreds of farmers are dying while carrying out routine agricultural work, govt cannot wash its hands of responsibility by merely paying compensation. We need accountability, stricter regulation of pesticides, and a comprehensive safety programme for farmers across Rajasthan," Kishanpole MLA Amin Kagzi said.

The death count surfaced alongside another troubling set of numbers from the assembly: 189 pesticide samples failed quality tests over the same two-year period. Of 5,570 pesticide samples collected across Rajasthan, 5,521 were analysed. While 5,332 met prescribed standards, 189 were found substandard. Authorities issued 282 notices, filed 14 court cases, suspended 14 licences and cancelled 22 licences following quality checks. Sriganganagar and Hanumangarh topped the list of substandard pesticide samples at 17 each, followed by Bikaner (13), Kota (10) and Bhilwara (9).

India looks to activate US deal only after tariff edge

KRITY AMBEY
New Delhi, 8 June

India is likely to operationalise its trade deal with the US only after ensuring that the tariff rate it receives is lower than that imposed on competing economies, a senior commerce ministry official said on Monday.

"I can finalise the deal even today, but I will operationalise only once I am sure all my competitors are paying more than me," the official said. "The 10 per cent will lapse on July 24. So if they want us to pay any additional tariff, they have to finish the Section 301 process, and they have to give us a better comparable advantage over competitors."

NEW DELHI HAS SOUGHT ASSURANCE FROM WASHINGTON THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE ANY MORE PROBES AGAINST INDIA UNDER SECTION 301, SAID A TOP COMMERCE MINISTRY OFFICIAL

According to the official, the US is likely to impose a relatively low tariff on India under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974.

While the Office of the US Trade Representative last week proposed a 12.5 per cent duty on Indian goods under Section 301, the tariff would not take effect immediately as Washington has invited public comments on the proposed action until July 6.

The proposal follows an investigation against India and several other economies under Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974, which allows Washington to probe and act against trade practices it considers harmful to US commerce.

New Delhi has also sought assurances from Washington that India would not face any further investigations under Section 301, the official indicated.

India and the US held another round of negotiations last week during a four-day visit to New Delhi by Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch and his team.

India-UK FTA

Implementation of India's free-trade agreement with the UK is likely to take longer, according to the official, as New Delhi is unwilling to forgo benefits on 88 steel tariff lines because of London's safeguard measures on the metal.

The UK has reduced tariff-free steel import quotas by 60 per cent, citing concerns over dumping. From July, steel shipments exceeding the quota limits will attract a 50 per cent duty. "I will not accept the 50 per cent and go ahead with the deal," the official said.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal met UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Peter Kyle in New Delhi last week to discuss implementation of the FTA signed in July 2025.

Following the meeting, the two sides resolved one of the three outstanding issues, the official said, without identifying the matter. "On the second and third issue, they have given us some offer; we have given some counter questions. Our teams are working together," the official said.

The UK's safeguard measures on steel imports and its Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism are among the issues India is seeking to address before implementing the agreement.

Exports grew 15% in Apr-May

India's goods exports rose 15 per cent year-on-year in April and May, the official said. The merchandise exports stood at $76.59 billion in April-May 2025.

A 15 per cent increase would imply cumulative exports of about $88.1 billion during the first two months of the current financial year.

Excluding petroleum products, merchandise exports grew 11 per cent during April-May, the official said. The commerce ministry is scheduled to release May trade data on June 15.

India's exports had expanded 13.8 per cent in April to a four-year high of $43.56 billion.

BHAVYA scheme will help create jobs, says Goyal

The ₹33,660 crore Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) scheme will help attract huge investments, create jobs, and provide modern social infrastructure in the 100 industrial parks to be developed under this initiative, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday. It aims to develop world-class industrial infrastructure, unlock manufacturing potential and drive the country's economic growth. PTI

EU flags 365 Indian products with pesticides, heavy metals

EU, from Page 1

There were other pesticides and chemicals found in various materials. For instance, a test on "organic ashwagandha root" was rejected by Spanish authorities because it was found to be containing cypermethrin, a pesticide whose limited reintroduction in the EU has become controversial, along with chlorpyrifos.

The government's restriction Tricyclazole, banned in the EU for its long-term mutagenic effects, has not worked as it was found in 53 products, mainly rice. Monocrotophos, dichlorvos and phorates were among other products that led to the rejection at the EU border.

DH sent a detailed query to Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority but received no response after waiting for two working days. Another query addressed to Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) did not get any response during the same time.

Major contaminants in Indian products

Contaminant / Hazard Group	Number of Products Flagged
Chlorpyrifos	117
Tricyclazole	53
Ethylene Oxide	39
Lead	9
Cadmium	9
Monocrotophos	9
Cypermethrin	7
Mercury	5
Mineral Oils (MOSH/MOAH)	5
Glycidyl Esters	4
Erucic Acid	4

No accountability

Public policy expert Narasimha Reddy Donthi said the rejections show lack of accountability. "The Government of India is not investigating where the contamination is taking place. Everytime the issue comes to the fore, blame game starts, which ultimately ends with the blame placed on the farmers. However, farmers don't use pesticides like ethylene oxide. It is the storage units that depend on the pesticide. But we don't have a system where a product is checked at every stage," he said.

A D Dileep Kumar of the Pesticide Action Network-India noted that India was among the handful of countries which opposed the ban on chlorpyrifos proposed by the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. "In 2020, the government issued a draft notification proposing to ban 27 toxic pesticides, including chlorpyrifos. But it soon made a U-turn on several of them. Now, the pesticide that has got exemption is costing farmers," he added.

It can be recalled that on April 24, 2024, *DH* had reported that the EU rejected or removed from markets 527 Indian products between September 2020 and April 2024 for containing ethylene oxide and other contaminants. At the time, the Centre had promised strict action to ensure quality reviews.

Policy for organic farming on panchayat land next year: CM

Farmers to get assistance of ₹10,000/acre annually for five years

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KURUKSHETRA, JUNE 7

Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini today announced that the state government will formulate a policy next year to promote natural and organic farming on panchayat-owned lands as part of its efforts to encourage sustainable agriculture.

CM Nayab Singh Saini and Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat at Kurukshetra University on Sunday.

Addressing an agriculture workshop organised under the Natural Farming Promotion and Cluster Formation Programme of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Saini said around 800 acres owned by the Agriculture Department would be leased exclusively to farmers willing to undertake natural and organic farming for at least the next 10 years. Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat and state Agriculture Minister Shyam Singh Rana were also present.

The Chief Minister said farmers certified by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) for natural and organic farming would receive financial assistance of Rs 10,000 per acre annually for five years. He added that the Haryana State Seed Certification Agency would be designated as the certification body for organic farming. To strengthen market access for farmers, the state will establish testing laboratories and APEDA-recognised certification centres for natural and organic produce.

Saini further announced that, in collaboration with Haryana Agricultural University, a 2,000-acre natural farming cluster would be developed in Kurukshetra under the 'Smart Agriculture' initiative. He assured farmers that the government would fully compensate them for any losses incurred under the programme. The Chief Minister also said Morni Block would be developed as a dedicated Natural and Organic Farming Block.

Urging farmers to participate in the initiative, Saini said the government was committed to supporting them from "seed to market". He added that it was the "collective and moral responsibility" of society to pass on fertile land, clean water and a healthy environment to future generations, which could be achieved through the adoption of natural farming practices.

Highlighting the progress made so far, Saini said the state launched the Natural Farming Scheme in 2022 and nearly two lakh farmers had registered close to three lakh acres on the portal. Of these, 23,930 farmers covering 44,077 acres had been verified for adopting natural farming. During 2025-26, natural farming was undertaken on 20,727 acres across Haryana.

He said 12,188 participants had been trained at natural farming training centres, while 6,234 sarpanches had received one-day online training.

Speaking on the occasion, Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat stressed the need for dedicated efforts to advance the Natural Farming Mission. He cautioned that agricultural land could eventually become barren if adequate attention was not paid to soil health and sustainable farming practices.

Expressing concern over the excessive use of urea, DAP and pesticides, Devvrat said merely increasing chemical fertiliser consumption would not ensure sustainable growth in agricultural production.

Govt: Farmers ramp up organic manure use in kharif season

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Central government on Monday said that farmers had purchased 11.17 lakh tonnes of organic manure during the ongoing kharif sowing season — a 3.5-fold increase from the 3.2 lakh tonnes in the corresponding period last year — reflecting a gradual move towards organic nutrient sources.

Addressing an inter-ministerial media briefing, Union Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilisers Additional Secretary Aparna S Sharma said the surge in organic manure procurement indicated a positive change in farmers' preference away from chemical fertilisers.

The Central government said the overall fertiliser stock position remained comfortable, with no availability challenges.

Insisting that the government was closely monitoring the situation to ensure smooth domestic supply, she said that the Department of Agriculture had assessed a total fertiliser requirement of 383.9 lakh tonnes for the 2026 kharif season.

Workers busy sowing for the kharif season, in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh. PTI

As of now, stocks stand at 197.56 lakh tonnes — more than 51% of the seasonal demand, significantly higher than the normal buffer level of around 33%.

"So far, farmers have purchased about 86.65 lakh tonnes of fertilisers, which is approximately 22.57% of the total requirement," Sharma said.

She added that domestic production and imports were continuing smoothly. A total of 147.4 lakh tonnes had been made available through domestic manufacturing and imports following the earlier crisis period.

In June alone, over 25 lakh tonnes of imported urea, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), and PKS had reached ports, while a tender for 17 lakh tonnes of urea was in progress.

Clearing bills

The government is clearing all subsidy bills as per the budgetary provisions, and the situation is being reviewed at the highest level through meetings of the Empowered Group of Secretaries.

In 2025, nearly 73% of the country's total fertiliser requirement was met through domestic production.

Overall domestic production of fertilisers — including urea, DAP, NPKs, and SSP — had risen from 433.29 lakh tonnes in 2021 to a record 524.62 lakh tonnes in 2025.

Urea production had increased from 225 lakh tonnes in 2014-15 to 306.67 lakh tonnes in 2024-25.

India continues to import substantial quantities of urea and DAP to bridge the demand-supply gap.

The budgetary allocation for fertiliser subsidies in 2026-27 is Rs 1.71 lakh crore. Currently, the maximum retail price (MRP) of neem-coated urea is Rs 242 per 45-kg bag, while DAP is being sold at 1,350 per 50-kg bag.

State procured record 147 lakh tonnes of paddy in 2025-26, says Minister

This is equivalent to 61% of paddy procured in the country, despite the Centre reducing the lifting of custom milled rice; Uttam Kumar Reddy flays the Opposition parties for playing spoilsport

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Telangana has procured a record quantity of 147 lakh tonnes of paddy in the 2025-26 agriculture (procurement) year, which is equivalent to 61% of the paddy procured in the country, despite the Centre reducing the lifting of custom milled rice after processing of the paddy procured at minimum support price based on the fair average quality norms, Civil Supplies and Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy announced.

The achievement was possible even after the State's repeated requests to the Centre, Ministry of Food and Public Distribution, to enhance the procurement quantity, fell on deaf ears, Mr. Uttam Kumar Reddy said addressing a press conference here on Tuesday.

Stating that Telangana had procured 75 lakh tonnes of paddy this Rabi season so far and another 1-2 lakh tonnes more was expected over the next few days.

Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy addresses a presser at the Secretariat in Hyderabad on Tuesday. SIDDHANT THAKUR

Hitting out at the Opposition Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for spreading lies about paddy procurement and misleading farmers, he said that both the parties did nothing to help farmers but had only created hurdles in procurement.

He noted that the procurement of paddy was just in this year's vicinity in 2020-21, the COVID affected year when purchase of paddy by traders and millers was not possible even to a small extent and the entire procurement was by the Civil Supplies Department, when it was a little over 141 lakh tonnes (1.41 crore tonnes) and this year (2025-26) it was 147 lakh tonnes so far, out of a total estimated production of 295 lakh tonnes.

The Minister said a total of ₹35,077 crore amount was credited to the 25.2 lakh farmers' bank accounts in KMS 2025-26 in lieu of paddy purchased from them and as the Centre had put limit on procurement for CMR the State Government had to spared ₹6,650 crore from the budget for paddy procurement and borrowed another ₹16,649 crore from banks for the purpose.

For the Rabi season, the government had disbursed ₹17,917 crore for the procurement of 75 lakh tonnes of paddy, including 12,557 tonnes of drenched paddy, which was purchased at MSP and was shifted immediately to parboiled rice mills. The minister stated that the State was far ahead of other States in opening or operating procurement centres – 8,448 in Kharif and 8,575 in Rabi.

He ridiculed the Opposition parties for their false propaganda on gunny bags, stating that 20.86 crore gunny sacks had been used for this purpose so far this Rabi, and another 2.11 crore bags were available.

Officials told to use land and reservoirs to tap solar power

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy has directed the Irrigation Department officials to identify and use available irrigation lands, reservoirs and canal systems for solar power generation on priority.

The Minister said the department should move beyond routine project execution and actively create its own power sources.

Solar projects on irrigation lands and canals should be treated as the first priority. The State was incurring huge expenditure on power for irrigation projects and lift schemes. The department should explore solar and pumped storage projects wherever possible to reduce long-term power costs and create sustainable energy sources.

Officials could use in-house technical expertise or even draft the services of professional agencies from outside to prepare the proposals.

Officials could use the studies and presentations available with the department and submit proposals without delay. "Solar projects on all available irrigation land should be the first priority. Other revenue sources can be taken up later," he said.

Feasibility studies were conducted at 16 reservoirs. Even if 10% of suitable reservoir and irrigation land area was used, it would create potential to rise the installed solar capacity of close to 7,000 MW.

The department was directed to work on the proposal and coordinate with the concerned Chief Engineers and nodal agencies to prepare a clear way forward.

Haryana Chief Minister's 'Go Global' approach gets a new boost

MPOST BUREAU

CHANDIGARH: Giving a fresh momentum to this 'Go Global' approach, Haryana's Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) will now be able to explore farming and agribusiness opportunities in Tanzania, Kenya and other African countries.

In the presence of Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini at Morni in Panchkula district, an agreement was signed between the country's renowned spice company MDH and six Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) of Haryana.

The initiative, being implemented by the Department of Foreign Cooperation and the Horticulture Department, aims to connect farmers with global markets, enhance their income and create new opportunities in the agriculture sector.

Addressing a dialogue programme, the Chief Minister said that in this year's Budget, the government had announced the development of the Morni region. In line with that announcement, the MoU has been signed today to promote natural farming in the area.

He assured that farmers adopting natural farming would be compensated in case of any losses. In addition, the company will offer farmers practising natural farming a price that is 10 per cent higher than the prevailing market rate. He said that the government's target is to initiate natural farming on approximately 4,000 acres in the first phase.

The Chief Minister said that the Haryana government does not want farmers to remain confined to traditional farming practices. Instead, it seeks to connect them with agricultural entrepreneurship, value addition and international trade, thereby making them self-reliant and prosperous. Keeping this objective in mind, continuous efforts are being made to ensure farmers gain access to global markets.

Under the agreement, commercial cultivation of various spice crops, including ginger, turmeric and chilli, will be promoted in the Morni region of Panchkula district. MDH will provide farmers with technical guidance, support for quality production, marketing assistance and procurement support.

Climate-resilient agriculture must become a national priority

- There is a compelling need to revive sustainable agricultural practices
- A blend of scientific innovations and traditional ecological wisdom will work wonders

V S R Naidu

El Niño, rainfall deficit and the imperative for climate-resilient agriculture in India

THE recent resurgence of El Niño has once again brought the issue of climate variability and agricultural vulnerability into sharp focus. El Niño, a climatic phenomenon associated with the abnormal warming of sea surface temperatures in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, has historically influenced weather patterns across the globe. The central parts of the country and North-East of the Peninsula experienced above-normal temperature.

For India, one of its most significant consequences is the likelihood of below-normal monsoon rainfall, which can adversely affect agriculture, water resources, livelihoods, and the broader economy.

India's agriculture is substantially dependent on the southwest monsoon. Nearly half of the country's cultivated area continues to rely on rainfall rather than assured irrigation. Consequently, any disruption in monsoon patterns has direct implications for food production and rural livelihoods. Meteorological assessments have often shown a correlation between El Niño years and weaker monsoons, though the intensity and impact may vary from one event to another.

The possibility of rainfall deficits during El Niño conditions raises concerns about the production of major crops such as rice, sugarcane, cotton, and other water-intensive crops. Reduced rainfall not only affects sowing operations but also impacts crop growth, productivity, and harvest outcomes. Farmers may face increased irrigation costs, groundwater depletion, and heightened risks of crop failure. Such challenges can adversely affect farm incomes and increase rural distress.

The implications extend beyond agriculture. Water scarcity affects drinking water availability, livestock health, hydropower generation, industrial operations, and urban water supply systems. Reservoir levels may decline, groundwater recharge may be reduced, and ecological systems dependent on seasonal rainfall may experience stress. In a country where agriculture supports millions of livelihoods and contributes significantly to food security, the consequences of prolonged rainfall deficits can be far-reaching.

The present situation calls for a shift from reactive responses to proactive adaptation strategies. Climate-resilient agriculture must become a national priority. One of the most practical approaches is the promotion of low water-consuming crops such as millets, pulses, oilseeds, and drought-resistant crop varieties. These crops generally require less water, exhibit greater tolerance to moisture stress, and contribute to nutritional security. Their wider adoption can reduce

dependence on water-intensive cultivation and enhance resilience against climate-induced uncertainties. However, crop diversification alone is not sufficient. Water conservation and resource management must receive equal attention. India possesses a rich heritage of traditional water harvesting systems, including tanks, ponds, community wells, and watershed management practices. For generations, rural communities maintained these systems through collective effort, ensuring water availability even during difficult years. The restoration and modernization of such practices can complement contemporary technological interventions.

Equally important is the revival of sustainable agricultural practices that strengthen soil health and reduce ecological stress. Composting, organic manure application, crop rotation, mixed farming, and livestock integration were once integral components of rural life. These practices enhanced soil fertility, improved moisture retention, and promoted long-term sustainability. Their relevance is increasing in the context of climate change and resource scarcity.

The challenge before policymakers is not merely to increase agricultural production but to ensure that production remains sustainable under changing climatic conditions.

The future of Indian agriculture lies in combining modern scientific innovations with traditional ecological wisdom. Technological advancements, climate advisories, efficient irrigation systems, improved seeds, and institutional support must work in harmony with proven community-based conservation practices. The emerging threat posed by El Niño should therefore be viewed not only as a climatic challenge but also as an opportunity to rethink agricultural priorities. It offers an occasion to revisit traditional knowledge, reduce dependence on resource-intensive practices, replace vulnerable systems with climate-resilient alternatives, and reinforce institutional support mechanisms. Such an integrated approach can help safeguard food security, protect natural resources, and strengthen rural livelihoods.

As climate uncertainties become more frequent, India must prepare for a future in which resilience becomes as important as productivity. Ensuring the well-being of both the planet and its people requires a balanced and sustainable agricultural strategy. The lessons of the past, combined with the innovations of the present, can guide the nation towards a more secure and climate-resilient future.

(The writer is a PR professional and Educationist)

India, US likely to sign 1st tranche of trade deal by July: Piyush Goyal

AGENCIES
New Delhi, 8 June

India could sign the first tranche of its long-awaited bilateral trade agreement with the United States as early as July, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Monday.

Speaking to media on the sideline of an event, Goyal further indicated that negotiations between the two countries are nearing a crucial stage despite recent tariff-related concerns.

The minister's remarks have raised expectations of an early breakthrough in trade talks that have been underway for months, with both sides seeking to strengthen economic ties and improve market access for businesses.

The proposed agreement is expected to provide a significant boost to bilateral trade and enhance opportunities for Indian exporters in key sectors.

Speaking about the progress of the negotiations, Goyal suggested that discussions between officials from India and the United States have advanced considerably in recent weeks and that efforts are underway to resolve the remaining issues.

The latest comments build on statements made by the minister last week, when he highlighted the rapid pace of engagement between the two countries. On June 5, Goyal said that a full team of US trade officials had visited New Delhi and held extensive discussions with their Indian counterparts to push the negotiations forward.

"We had a full team of officials from different divisions of trade from the U.S. in Delhi," Goyal had said.

According to the minister, both sides are working to close the remaining gaps in the proposed agreement and are focused on reaching a mutually beneficial outcome.

He had expressed confidence that the first phase of the trade pact could be finalised by the middle of July, describing it as a "very vibrant first tranche" that would lay the foundation for deeper economic cooperation between the two countries.

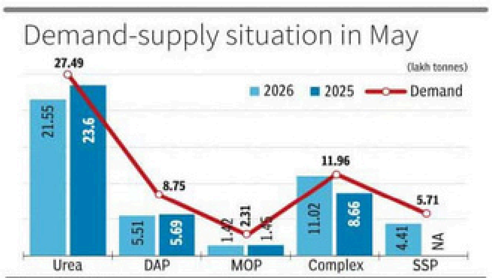
The proposed trade agreement is seen as a key step in expanding India-US economic relations at a time when both nations are looking to diversify supply chains, increase investment flows and strengthen strategic partnerships across sectors.

Complex fertilizer sales up 27% in May, chops off savings from lower urea sales

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

After higher sales for two months since the US-Israel conflict against Iran began, India has been able to contain the consumption of major fertilizers, such as urea and di-ammonia phosphate (DAP), during May below the estimated demand for the month as well as from year-ago levels. Only in the case of complex fertilizer (combination of N, P, K nutrients) there was a 27 per cent rise in sales and it has contributed to the total sales of all four key fertilizers matching the year-ago number.

As reported by *businessline*, there was panic buying of fertilizers in March and April, leading to a huge surge in sales. The Centre reached out to the States to ensure the sales were reduced.



Source: Fertilizer Ministry

Official sources said that overall consumption of urea, DAP, muriate of potash (MOP) and complex was 39.5 lakh tonnes (lt) in May against 39.4 lt a year ago.

Last month, sales of urea were 21.55 lt (23.6 lt), while those of DAP were 5.51 lt (5.69 lt) and MOP a tad lower at 1.42 lt (1.45 lt). But complex increased to 11.02 lt from 8.66 lt a year ago, and this offset the savings the government may have made from highly subsidised urea and DAP.

While the government has been able to maintain the retail prices of urea and DAP, rates of popular NPK products (having 3 or 4 nutrients) increased by 16-41 per cent from a year ago.

MAJOR CONCERNS

With the overall sales for May, fertilizer consumption in the first two months of the current fiscal have reached 64 lt against 58.32 lt during the corresponding period of 2025-26 and 51.29 lt in the comparable period of 2024-25.

"Continuous over-reliance on chemical inputs affects soil biodiversity and microbial activity, reducing the natural fertility and long-term productive capacity of agricultural land," Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said in a communication to the States.

ITC turns focus on agri, manufacturing, distribution

Amit Vijay Mohile
Mumbai

ITC has outlined a new growth blueprint centred on manufacturing, agriculture and distribution, signalling a strategic shift beyond consumer brands as the company's primary source of competitive advantage.

According to its FY26 annual report, ITC plans to leverage more than 250 manufacturing facilities, nearly 70 lakh retail outlets, around 7,500 MSME partners and almost 90 per cent domestic value addition to drive its next phase of growth.

At the heart of this strategy is one of India's largest manufacturing ecosystems. ITC today operates more than 250 manufacturing facilities, supported by around 7,500 MSME partners, with nearly 90 per cent domestic value addition across its businesses.

STRATEGIC ASSET

Rather than viewing this network purely as production capacity, the company increasingly sees it as a strategic asset that can accelerate innovation, improve speed-to-market and strengthen supply-chain resilience.

The same philosophy extends to distribution. ITC's products today reach nearly 70 lakh retail outlets through a multi-channel network spanning direct distribution, wholesale, modern trade, e-commerce and quick commerce. Increasingly supported by digital tools, the network is positioned not merely as a route to market but as shared infrastructure capable of supporting multiple consumer businesses simultaneously.

The strategy allows newer businesses to leverage an established distribution backbone instead of building independent networks, reducing both cost and time-to-market. Agriculture is also being repositioned from a sourcing function to a strategic capability.

KEY INTEGRATION

Backed by decades of farmer relationships and extensive procurement networks, the agri business now underpins food, exports and value-added manufacturing while strengthening traceability, domestic sourcing and supply-chain resilience. Together with nearly 90 per cent domestic value addition, it reflects ITC's increasing emphasis on integrating sourcing with manufacturing and consumer businesses.

Perhaps the most significant message in the annual report is how ITC now describes itself.

Rather than presenting manufacturing, agriculture, research, packaging, technology and distribution as separate business verticals, the report repeatedly positions them as capabilities that reinforce one another across the enterprise. That represents a subtle but important evolution — from building a diversified portfolio of businesses to building an integrated operating platform capable of supporting multiple growth engines.

Preparing rural India for an uncertain monsoon

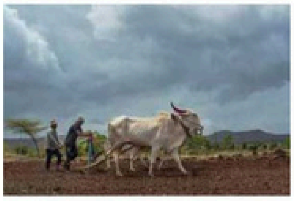
District-level institutional capacity will be put to test. Timely action on availability of seeds, water and crop advise, is needed

PVS Suryakumar

Meteorological agencies have warned of El Niño conditions and increased probability of deficient rainfall in several regions, particularly during the critical August-September period when standing kharif crops are most vulnerable. Such forecasts inevitably trigger concerns about agricultural output, food prices, rural incomes and economic growth. Agriculture may account for a smaller share of GDP today, but a significant proportion of India's population, livelihoods and economic activity continues to depend directly or indirectly on agriculture and the monsoon.

El Niño, a periodic warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific, influences weather systems across large parts of the world. While El Niño increases the risk of a weaker monsoon, its impact varies across years and regions. Weather forecasts matter. But preparedness matters no less. Recent reviews by the Agriculture Minister have highlighted an important but less understood aspect of Indian agriculture — the district-level contingency plans designed to respond to weather uncertainty. These encompass moisture conservation, seed preparedness, alternative crop strategies and coordinated action across institutions.

For many outside the agricultural system, these may appear to be routine administrative responses. In reality, they are part of a much larger preparedness framework that India has been building over several decades through the efforts of agricultural scientists, meteorologists, research institutions and State governments. District-specific contingency plans address delayed monsoons, droughts, dry spells and other weather aberrations. Their purpose is to help farmers adapt to a changed reality.



MONSOON. If delayed, farmers will need to go for alternative crop strategies

FACILITATING MEASURES

What does such preparedness actually involve? First, seed preparedness. If the onset of the monsoon is delayed or rainfall becomes erratic, farmers may need access to short-duration varieties or alternative crops better suited to a shortened growing season. Recommendations alone are insufficient; the required seed must reach the village at the right time. Equally important is affordability. Smallholders often exhaust their limited savings on the first round of failed sowing and may not have the resources to purchase fresh seed without timely support. Second, advisory support. Beyond rainfall forecasts, farmers require practical guidance. Should sowing be delayed? Should crop choice be altered? Should fertilizer application schedules be modified? How should scarce moisture be conserved for critical crop stages?

Third, moisture/water management. Every millimetre of rainfall assumes value. Mulching, small farm ponds, desilting tanks, and protective irrigation become critical. These simple investments often prove invaluable during difficult times. Fourth, efficient use of available fertilizers and timely agronomic practices become crucial during moisture stress.

Fifth, fodder availability, drinking water arrangements and veterinary support for livestock become integral components of drought preparedness. Livestock often provides a critical buffer for rural households when crops fail or incomes decline. Above all, there is the question of institutional coordination and timely action.

Contingency planning, in reality, is a chain of practical decisions: whether an alternative seed reaches a village in time; whether a farmer receives timely advice on sowing; whether a farm pond or village tank provides one protective irrigation; whether fodder and credit are available; whether procurement, storage and markets are ready to support any shift in cropping patterns and, if not, what corrective action is required. Its effectiveness is ultimately measured not by the document prepared but by the quality and timeliness of actions taken across thousands of villages.

This is why the discussion around district contingency plans deserves wider public attention. India's agricultural resilience today is stronger than it was a generation ago, not because the monsoon has become more reliable, but because knowledge, institutions and contingency systems have steadily evolved. Agricultural resilience is built not in the year of crisis but in the years preceding it. Yet even the best-designed plans can be undermined by failures in execution.

As the kharif season progresses, public attention will understandably remain focused on rainfall figures and reservoir levels. Equally important, though less visible, will be the preparedness measures unfolding across districts and villages. The coming months may test not only the monsoon, but also the institutional memory that Indian agriculture has accumulated over decades — and the ability to translate that learning into timely action.

The writer is former Deputy Managing Director, NABARD. Views are personal

Govt flags rain deficit; 315 districts face Kharif risk

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The delayed monsoon in India has rung alarm bells, forcing the Government to go into firefighting mode. Faced with a 43 per cent rain deficit so far, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Chouhan on Tuesday admitted it will adversely impact the sowing of kharif crops and said the Government is making preparations to mitigate the looming challenge in 315 districts identified as most vulnerable to crop damage.

States have been asked to use water judiciously and to clean ponds, streams, farm ponds and check dams under the VB-GRAM G (Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin) programme to preserve water for irrigation contingencies.

The ministry has mapped 315 districts across Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha – as likely to receive below-normal rainfall. Of these, 111 districts – including 20 in Maharashtra – have been classified as "most vulnerable" owing to irrigation cover of less than 25 per cent. Another 76 districts with 25–50 per cent irrigation fall in the "medium vulnerable" category, while 128 districts with adequate dam and irrigation infrastructure are tagged "least vulnerable." A majority of these districts are located across 12 states—Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. Detailed discussions were held with Agriculture Ministers and District Collectors of these states, and they were urged to expedite preparedness at the local level. India received 60 mm rainfall as against the normal of 120 mm between June 1 and June 23. Several key agricultural states have recorded sharp deficit of rainfall, raising concerns over the kharif crops plantation which relies heavily on monsoon rains. More than half of India's kharif arable land is rain-fed. Among the worst-affected states, Maharashtra and Gujarat have reported rainfall deficit around 70 to 74 percent so far.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Chouhan

Sharing details, Chouhan said weak monsoon conditions were likely to persist until July 2, leaving little time for farmers to plant the kharif (summer) crop. As of June 22, sowing of kharif crops covered less than 10 per cent of total sown area - marginally higher than the 11.79 million hectare recorded in the year-ago period, at 11.99 million hectare - with most crops tracking ahead except soyabean. "Overall, there is a 43 per cent deficit in monsoon rains. IMD forecasts that the weak monsoon is likely to continue till July 2. It means, kharif crops could be impacted," Chouhan told reporters after the review meeting on monsoon progress.

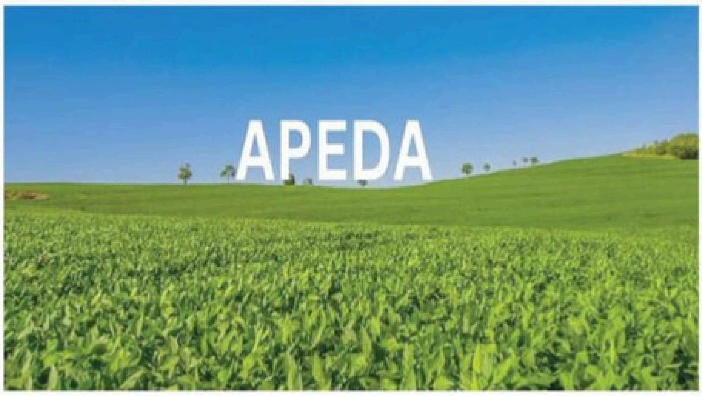
"There is a gap in rainfall. We need to suggest to farmers to go for alternative crops. We will not let farm fields remain empty," the minister said. Seed and fertiliser availability is adequate for the season, he added. Reservoir levels are currently above last year's position, though declining. The ministry has called for extensive enrolment under crop insurance schemes and Kisan Credit Cards in the identified states.

The 731 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) have been asked to step up farmer outreach, with timely advisories to be disseminated via SMS, WhatsApp, call centres, and other media. On production estimates, Chouhan said the forecasts are based on normal conditions but affirmed, "We will ensure production does not fall" he added.

APEDA trains 100 startups to push agri-food exports

Event provided direct access to global buyers and enabled high-value B2B engagements with international stakeholders

NEW DELHI



AS many as 100 startups from 22 states and two Union Territories have completed Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority's (APEDA) acceleration programme aimed at fostering innovation-led growth in India's agri-food export sector, according to a statement issued by the Commerce and Industry Ministry.

The first cohort under APEDA's BHARATI (Bharat's Hub for Agritech, Resilience, Advancement and Incubation for Export Innovation), flagship export enablement programme aims to cultivate a dynamic ecosystem aligned with India's target of achieving exports worth $50 billion in APEDA-scheduled products by 2030.

The programme was launched to identify, nurture and support high-potential startups developing innovative products, technologies and solutions that can enhance India's agricultural and processed food exports.

The inaugural cohort comprising 100 startups was selected through a rigorous multi-stage evaluation process from more than 700 applications received from across the country.

Reflecting the diversity and vibrancy of India's innovation ecosystem, the cohort featured entrepreneurs ranging in age from 17 to 75 years.

The participating startups underwent a structured 120-hour export-focused acceleration programme covering export preparedness, market access, business scaling, regulatory compliance, packaging, branding and investor readiness.

The programme also provided one-to-one mentorship, masterclasses by industry experts and opportunities to engage with stakeholders from government institutions, industry bodies, financial institutions, exporters and investors. These interactions enabled startups to explore commercial partnerships, strengthen market linkages and enhance their export readiness. As part of its international market exposure initiative, APEDA facilitated the participation of the top eight BHARATI startups at Gulfood 2026 in Dubai, one of the world's largest food and beverage trade exhibitions.

The event provided direct access to global buyers and enabled high-value B2B engagements with international trade stakeholders.

More than 100 B2B meetings were held between startups and international traders and importers, and product samples were showcased to prospective buyers.

APEDA chairman Abhishek Dev said that the BHARATI programme reflects the organisation's commitment to building a future-ready export ecosystem driven by innovation, entrepreneurship and global competitiveness.

■ 315 districts face severe risk as monsoon deficit hits 43%

Shivraj holds review meet on El Nino effect on agriculture

SHASHI BHUSHAN
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23

Union agriculture minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said that the government has identified 315 districts facing a 43 per cent monsoon deficit due to the El Niño factor, threatening kharif sowing, and has rolled out a special contingency plan to mitigate the impact.

Mr Chouhan chaired a high-level virtual meeting with agriculture ministers of states, senior officials, district collectors and experts to review the situation across the country. He assured farmers that the Centre and state governments are jointly undertaking all necessary measures to address any challenge.

> Weak monsoon can directly affect kharif crops, particularly in rainfed regions. Keeping these risks in view, the Centre has been making advance preparations for several days.
> — Shivraj Singh Chouhan, *Union minister*

After the meeting, Mr Chouhan said that the southwest monsoon is significantly delayed this year and rainfall so far has been around 43 per cent below normal. According to IMD forecasts, rainfall is likely to remain weak even during the week ending July 2.

The minister noted that this could directly affect kharif crops, particularly in rainfed regions where agriculture is heavily dependent on monsoon rains. Keeping these risks in view, the Central government, under the leadership and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been making advance preparations for several days.

"The agriculture ministry and ICAR jointly assessed districts vulnerable to low rainfall and inadequate irrigation based on scientific data. Around 315 districts have been identified as potentially affected by weak monsoon conditions. Of these, 111 districts have been categorised as high priority, where irrigation coverage is below 25 per cent. Another 76 districts fall under the medium-priority category, with irrigation coverage between 25 and 50 per cent, while 128 districts have been classified as low priority owing to relatively better irrigation facilities through dams and other sources," the he said, adding that a majority of these districts are located across 12 states—Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

Little political appetite in Delhi to seal US trade pact right now

HARDENING STANCE. Pushback coming on opening up farm sector, steep tariff cuts

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

DEAL DOWNSIDES

- Disproportionate tariff burden unacceptable to India
- Farm sector concerns remain a major hurdle
- US tariff pressure eased after IEEPA tariffs struck down
- India wants to wait for Section 301 probe outcome
- BoP risks are making New Delhi cautious on tariff cuts

There is currently little political appetite in India to conclude the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with the US as any deal that imposes a disproportionate tariff-reduction burden on the country, particularly in the politically sensitive agriculture sector, is viewed as "untenable", sources said.

The government is also concerned about the impact of steep tariff cuts on India's balance of payments at a time when its trade surplus with the US is narrowing. New Delhi would prefer to wait for the outcome of the ongoing US Section 301 investigations rather than negotiate under the shadow of tariff threats.

"At present, the US tariffs on Indian exports are almost back to the levels prevailing when President Donald Trump took office, as reciprocal tariffs have been suspended and the additional 10 per cent global tariff imposed in their place is set to lapse on July 24. In such a situation, it would be politically untenable for the government to accept a trade deal that places a disproportionate tariff-reduction burden on India," a source tracking the matter told *businessline*.

OPENING AGRI

The US demand for greater market access for farm products has further complicated the negotiations. Farmers' organisations have opposed any move to open up the sector, arguing that Indian farmers cannot compete with heavily subsidised American agriculture.

"It is a huge challenge to persuade the US to moderate its demands on agricultural market access as the Trump administration is under pressure to deliver on commitments made to the American farm lobby. This is fuelling opposition in India, with farmers and farm organisations increasingly calling for the proposed trade deal to be shelved," the source said.

India is also seeking tariff terms that are more favourable than those offered to competing Asian exporters such as Vietnam and Bangladesh. The February 6 framework — under which New Delhi agreed to lower tariffs on industrial goods and several agricultural products in return for an 18 per cent US tariff above MFN rates — initially appeared acceptable as Indian exports were then facing an additional 50 per cent levy under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA), and that would have given India a competitive edge. However, the IEEPA tariffs were subsequently struck down by the US Supreme Court.

BoP WORRY

A shrinking trade surplus with the US, coupled with concerns over the balance of payments amid a widening overall trade deficit and volatile global capital flows, has made policymakers more cautious.

Per GTRI's Ajay Srivastava, India faces limited downside even if the deal does not materialise, as most US imports are expected to revert to normal MFN tariff treatment once the Section 122 global tariffs expire.

While Section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminium will remain and fresh Section 301 tariffs are possible, the investigations are still underway.

Storage crisis looms as Punjab godowns choked with old stocks

Gurpreet Singh Nibber
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CHANDIGARH : Foodgrain storage godowns in Punjab are currently choked to the brim with 150 lakh tonnes of rice remaining from the previous three seasons. Also, 54 lakh tonnes of paddy temporarily kept in mills is waiting to be shelled, which will add an additional 36 lakh tonnes of rice, worsening the severe storage crisis in the state.

Once the paddy is shelled, it will create a massive stockpile of 186 lakh tonnes. Combined with over 140 lakh tonnes of wheat from the last three seasons, these huge food reserves are taking up space. Some of this harvest is stored poorly.

With 326 lakh tonnes of foodgrains heading for state godowns, Punjab has completely run out of storage space. State food and civil supplies officials are now concerned about finding adequate facilities to store the upcoming paddy harvest due in October and November.

The slow movement of grains is making problems worse. The state food department asked the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to move 12 lakh tonnes of rice every month, but the FCI is only moving 5 lakh tonnes.

"We have covered godowns of 183 lakh tonnes capacity, which have been choked completely," said principal secretary, food and civil supplies, Punjab, Rahul Tiwari. "Then comes covered area plinths (CAP) storage of nearly 60 lakh tonne capacity, which has also been occupied. We have no space to store the rice to be processed from the paddy of the previous kharif season," he added.

STORAGE WOES

- **183 lakh tonne** Total covered space to store foodgrains in Punjab
- **150 lakh tonne** Rice stored of previous 3 seasons
- **60 lakh tonne** Covered area plinths storage
- **140 lakh tonne** Wheat of previous 3 seasons

An official from the state food department said that all available space in the state, including covered godowns, mandi yards, and rice mills, is completely full. Because space is still available in consuming states, the state government has asked the Centre to transfer the grain stocks there.

The Rice Millers Association, Punjab, recently met BJP national president Nitin Nabin to demand the urgent removal of piling food grain stocks.

"We have asked the BJP national president to take up the food grains storage problem in the state with the Union government. If this issue is not resolved, it will lead to a severe problem for the farmers during the upcoming kharif harvest. Still, 30-35% of the previous season's paddy milling is waiting to be done," said Bharat Bhushan Binta, president, Rice Millers Association, Punjab.

Chief secy urges Centre for more storage space

Chief secretary KAP Sinha has urged the Centre to build extra CAP storage. In a communiqué to the Union food and public distribution secretary, Sinha stated that state agencies procured 121.63 lakh tonnes of wheat during the recent rabi season. However, due to slow grain movement, the state was already holding a massive 36 lakh tonnes of wheat stock from previous years ahead of the harvest.

"Due to shortage of storage space, state agencies had to store around 40 lakh metric tonnes of wheat in rice mills and mandi yards," Sinha added.

The communiqué said that average wheat movement from the state has been around 5 lakh tonnes for several months.

"If this trend persists, only 50 lakh tonnes of wheat will be cleared between June 2026 and March 2027, triggering a severe shortage of storage space," it added.

India-US trade talks progress, pact timeline remains elusive

IMPASSE. Uncertainty on US tariffs, need to guard sensitive sectors slowing negotiations

Amiti Sen
New Delhi

Two days of intense negotiations between US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal ended on Wednesday without a breakthrough on the proposed interim bilateral trade agreement (BTA). Both sides reported "substantial progress" but refrained from indicating when an agreement would be finalised.

Sources said persistent uncertainty over the US tariff regime, including two ongoing Section 301 investigations involving India, as well as the need to safeguard sensitive sectors, such as agriculture, and address unresolved market access issues were among the factors demanding more time for the negotiations.

STALEMATE CONTINUES. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal with US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer at the talks PTI

HIGHLY FLUID

"The situation on the US tariff front remains highly fluid. India needs greater clarity on how the ongoing Section 301 investigations could affect it and its competing countries, and whether any resulting measure would be legally sustainable. It can make meaningful commitments only when there is a clearer picture of the trade landscape it will ultimately be negotiating within," a person tracking the matter told *businessline*.

In a statement, the Commerce Ministry said both sides noted substantial progress by the negotiating teams in recent months and welcomed the momentum generated by successive technical and ministerial-level engagements.

"The two leaders conducted a comprehensive review of core BTA elements, including enhanced market access, digital trade, supply chain resilience, reduction of non-tariff barriers, and expanded cooperation in strategic sectors," the statement said.

The Ministry added that discussions focused on pathways to conclude an interim agreement as an important milestone towards a comprehensive BTA, but stopped short of providing a timeline.

Greer, too, offered no indication of an imminent conclusion. "President Trump and Prime Minister Modi have an amazing relationship. They've nurtured it over many years. Just last week, they met at G7 at Evian, France. I was there and they agreed to take the relationship to the next level, which includes the trade deal we are working on and includes every aspect of the relationship," he said in a video message.

ONE-WAY PACT

Ajay Srivastava of GTRI said that when US Ambassador Sergio Gor declared on May 30 that the deal was '99 per cent ready', expectations were high.

"Yet, the BTA negotiations remain stuck because the foundation of the original bargain, as defined in the India-US joint statement of February 7, has collapsed," Srivastava said.

He said that after the US Supreme Court invalidated the reciprocal tariffs, the proposed BTA increasingly resembles a one-way market-access agreement rather than a balanced trade pact.

Trade expert Abhijit Das said the delay could give the government more time to reassess its commitments in agriculture.

"This might provide an opportunity to modify its negotiating approach on agricultural issues in light of concerns raised by farmers across the country," he said.

Organic fertilizer 'Oorja' launched in Imphal

CORRESPONDENT

IMPHAL, June 15: Manipur Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh on Monday flagged off fertilizer distribution trucks and launched an organic fertilizer 'Oorja' during the Fertilizer Distribution Camp for Kharif 2026, organised by the Directorate of Agriculture, Government of Manipur, at Sanjenthong, Imphal.

As part of the initiative to promote sustainable farming practices, Oorja is being provided to farmers at a subsidised rate of Rs 250 per bag against its market price of Rs 480. The Chief Minister also inspected the Organic Outlet Shop near the venue.

The Chief Minister said the government has taken up measures to ensure the timely availability of fertilizers to farmers across the State.

He stated that around 1.8 lakh bags of urea were distributed up to September last year, although reports of shortages were received from certain areas. To address such concerns, fertilizer distribution is now being carried out based on Aadhaar cards, farmer cards and location-specific requirements to ensure fair and transparent allocation.

Khemchand informed that around 2 lakh bags of urea are currently available in stock and there is no shortage at present. He said fertilizers would be distributed on a need basis and only after verification of proper documents.

He further stated that officials of the Agriculture Department would closely monitor distribution in all districts and appealed to farmers to report any grievances related to fertilizer availability to the Directorate of Agriculture.

The Chief Minister also highlighted the government's efforts to reduce dependence on chemical fertilizers and gradually expand organic farming in the State. He said around 4,000 hectares have already been brought under organic cultivation and the government is working towards bringing another 4,000 hectares under organic farming in the coming years.

India looks to renew trade with Gulf, revive Chabahar as war winds down

JAYANTA ROY CHOWDHURY
New Delhi, 15 June

With a peace deal between the US and Iran likely to be signed on Friday, India is looking towards renewing its trade links with Tehran and other Gulf states, including oil purchases, participating in the reconstruction of war-ravaged infrastructure in the Gulf area, as well as resumption of cargo operations at the strategic Chabahar port.

India is particularly looking forward to wrapping up negotiations for the import of fertilizer crucial to the success of its Monsoon crop from West Asia and East Europe at favourable rates now that the two sides will allow ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz without hindrance.

Top officials said New Delhi has been following the agreement diplomacy and will be looking closely at the deal and working with Indian industry and missions in West Asia to boost trade, which was severely hit by the ongoing crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, and "in participating in infrastructure reconstruction work."

"Our interest in Iranian oil and use of Chabahar port remains. We will, however, have to study the nitty-gritty closely," Pinak R Chakravarty, former Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, told UNI.

The diplomat also pointed out that with 15 per cent of India's global trade going to or coming from the Gulf, the three-month-long crisis had caused enormous losses to Indian businesses and added: "If the peace holds, then we will get a chance to recoup the losses and access supplies of crude, gas and fertiliser vital to our economy".

India's exports to the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar had dropped drastically as the war progressed, with both exports and imports being impacted. Exports to the UAE alone plunged by 62 per cent in the month of March alone.

India needs 17 million tonnes of urea by August 2026, when the country's Kharif or monsoon crop is sown. However, domestic production and stocks held by states, farm cooperatives, and the fertilizer companies are insufficient to meet demand. A shortfall of about 2 million tonnes has to be brought in within the next month and a half to make good the needs of Indian agriculture.

"We expected prices of fertilizer, which had shot up from roughly USD 419 per metric ton to peaks exceeding USD 850 in the spring, to come down, and we expect the rupee to strengthen against the dollar, reducing our bill. The end of the blockade will also make it easier and cut time in bringing in our fertilizer needs of urea, potash etc," said Prof Biswajit Dhar, former WTO Chair at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade. India also holds a 10-year operational contract for the Shahid Behesti Terminal at Chabahar, which runs till 2034, but operations at the port have been severely hit by US sanctions. "We will have to see whether sanctions will be lifted in the final deal that is signed," said Chakravarty.

India, which has sunk some US $ 120 million into the strategically located port at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, can, of course, transfer control to a local Iranian firm, but would prefer to run the port in its own way, using it not only for trade with Iran but also with central Asian countries.

"India used to be a regular buyer of Iranian crude, and it accounted for about 13 per cent of the country's total crude imports in 20016-17. It fell to negligible amounts as US sanctions tightened and has resumed in April this year as the US waived sanctions to stabilize crude prices ... we hope we can buy more crude from Teheran to balance our basket where we take about a third from Russia, and the rest from Africa, West Asia and the Americas," said petroleum ministry officials.

Brent crude futures price for August delivery fell by over 5 per cent to USD 83.94 a barrel at 5 pm IST. The benchmark crude price had crossed USD 120 a barrel in March in the early days of the conflict.

High crude prices strained India's balance of payments situation and saw the rupee falling against the dollar by nearly 12 per cent in one single year. Shipping freight rates and insurance also increased as the conflict saw oil tankers and cargo vessels becoming collateral damage.

REALITY CHECK

POLICIES TO BOOST COMPETITIVENESS HAVEN'T DELIVERED ENOUGH; NON-TARIFF MEASURES REMAIN A BLIND SPOT

Why FTA gains elude India

BISWAJIT DHAR

Distinguished professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi

IN THE POST-COVID phase, free trade agreements (FTAs) have been the drivers of India's foreign trade. In this period, India has finalised seven FTAs while six more FTAs are in the making, with the soon-to-be completed bilateral trade agreement with the US being the most significant among them. India is implementing or negotiating 17 FTAs and is among the more active countries in forging bilateral trade deals.

Expectedly, about two-thirds of India's total trade was conducted with its FTA partners in 2025-26 and almost 71% of its exports and 57% of its imports were accounted for by these countries. In the recent past, overall exports were driven by the two largest markets — the US and European Union (EU) — although during the previous fiscal year, exports to the US remained almost stagnant while India's presence in the EU declined for the second consecutive year.

India's overall record of implementing FTAs is not very impressive. From the end of the previous decade, trade with its FTA partners has not reflected the increased opportunities that Indian businesses have been offered through preferential access to their markets. In the post-Covid years, India's overall exports increased by a compounded rate of 1.2%, while overall imports increased by 6%. On the other hand, the increase in India's exports to its FTA partners was identical, while its imports were slightly higher. While growth in exports remained sluggish, imports have registered a consistent increase, given the sizeable market access that India gave to its partner countries in all the recent FTAs. Consequently, India faces the spectre of a rising merchandise trade deficit, which has now begun to hurt the economy.

A closer look at the trends of implementing FTAs with major partners — including the Association of South East Asian Nations members, Republic of Korea, and Japan, which are being implemented for nearly a decade and a half — provide some answers why the country has not realised the expected benefits from these agreements. The problem seems to be the inability of Indian businesses to consistently serve these markets. Until 2022-23, India's exports to all the three FTA partners increased steadily, but in subsequent years the rising trends reversed sharply, especially with Korea (by over 25%). The FTA with the European Free Trade Association raised considerable expectations of increased market access for Indian businesses due to the lowering of tariffs by the four-member bloc, but exports to these countries stagnated at less than $2 billion.

> While growth in exports remained sluggish, imports have registered a consistent increase, given the sizeable market access that India gave to its partner countries in all the recent FTAs

FTAs have not delivered the desired results through higher export earnings due to two sets of incapacities of Indian producers — in manufacturing and agriculture. First, policy measures taken to improve competitiveness have not delivered adequately. Second, Indian producers do not seem to have fully realised that market access in goods trade are no longer determined by tariffs; the non-tariff measures (NTMs), comprising product and process standards, hold the keys to gaining market access.

The National Democratic Alliance government launched the Make in India initiative to transform India into a global manufacturing hub and increase the share of manufacturing in GDP from 16% to 25% by 2020. Six years later, the the production-linked incentive scheme was launched, targeting 14 strategically important industries. The two initiatives were expected to improve competitiveness of critical manufacturing sectors, leading to increased exports. However, questions are being asked about these schemes as the share of manufacturing dropped to below 15% in 2025-26. Moreover, improvements in research and development intensity, considered a sine qua non for improving competitiveness, were not seen since 2010. Therefore, in order to improve manufacturing competitiveness, the government needs to urgently focus on pulling manufacturing industries by their bootstraps to make them globally competitive in a time-bound manner. At the same time, public-private partnerships must be forged to substantially step up investments in science and technology institutions, without which the technological gap with India's competitors can never be bridged.

For decades, India's agriculture has been steeped in crisis, but few meaningful efforts have been taken to change the dynamics of this sector. Even a comprehensive agricultural policy that could improve sectoral competitiveness and ensure that products meet global food safety standards was never developed in nearly eight decades since Independence. Though the government has often spoken about making India an agricultural export hub, the lack of efforts at improving competitiveness and product quality would leave this objective unrealised.

NTMs are formally included in all FTAs that India has signed with advanced countries in recent years. The more important NTMs include sanitary and phytosanitary measures, technical barriers to trade, environmental standards, and international labour standards. Compliance with these complex regulatory standards is imperative for Indian businesses to realise the expected gains from these FTAs. While endorsing the FTA with India, the EU underlined that product/process standards for protecting "human, animal, and plant health are non-negotiable", and that all products imported from India under the agreement would have to respect these standards with no exception.

Environmental and labour standards have increasingly been used as a leverage to regulate market access in advanced countries. In their respective FTAs, the EU and the UK have included the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a carbon tax imposed at the border on imports covering five sectors — iron and steel, cement, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen. The CBAM has an extensive set of procedures that raise the cost of exporting to the EU and the UK. Therefore, Indian businesses need to be fully prepared to ensure that the CBAM's high compliance costs do not erode their competitiveness.

Thus, for India to benefit from the newly-minted FTAs, adequate investments must be made for upgrading production facilities as well as regulatory institutions in the country.

IIRR develops new climate change resistant varieties

NEERAJ KUMAR | DC

HYDERABAD, JUNE 15

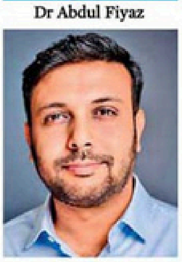
With global weather shifts threatening crop yields, ICAR's Indian Institute of Rice Research (IIRR) has developed a series of high-yielding, climate-smart, and bio-fortified rice varieties, which are tailored to combat various environmental stresses and nutritional deficiencies.

The institute has also completed testing a few more climate-resilient paddy varieties, ranging from DRR Dhan 92 to 101, and is awaiting Gazette notification before their release. These latest varieties are designed to shorten crop duration, withstand El Niño-related stress, and deliver potential yields of more than 40 quintals per hectare.

Excerpts from an interview with IRRI principal scientist Dr Abdul Fiyaz:

Q&A

Dr Abdul Fiyaz



***Q** Telangana's shift toward millets and horticulture, and the push for paddy diversification, have affected seed demand. How can IRRR support state seed hubs in ensuring the timely availability of stress-tolerant rice seeds?*

The Telangana government is promoting only eight high-yielding fine-rice (sannalu) varieties to ensure farmers receive the promised ₹500 per quintal bonus. Advocating only these eight varieties could create an epidemic-like situation, which is not desirable. There are many good varieties developed by state and central institutions.

***Q** Farmers worry about procurement issues and market support. What do you advise?*

If procurement or support is limited to a narrow set of slender-grain varieties, farmers could face market or MSP uncertainty. I recommend that state procurement lists include a broader mix of medium-stature, high-yielding, disease-resistant varieties so that farmers have viable choices.

***Q** Tell us about the speed-breeding facility. How did it come about, and who can use it?*

The facility, inaugurated by ICAR Director General M.L. Jat alongside the foundation stone for the Modern Seed Godown at our Rajendranagar campus, is designed to accelerate varietal development. It provides one of the fastest speed-breeding capacities in India. It is not restricted to our institute; researchers from other public and private institutions can bring validated protocols and use the facility for any crop. We have already produced breeder and foundation seed of varieties developed here, so seed multiplication can begin as the season opens.

***Q** What exactly is speed breeding, and how does it shorten development cycles?*

Speed breeding uses controlled growth chambers where light, temperature, humidity, and photoperiod are precisely managed to hasten plant growth and flowering.

Under these conditions, a rice crop can reach flowering in as little as one to one-and-a-half months.

By repeating sowing and harvest cycles — typically five to six generations in 12 months — we can advance generations far faster than under conventional field-breeding conditions.

DRR Dhan 75(popular as Bhagyanagar Sona)

Q What are the main costs and technical challenges?

The primary additional expenses are energy costs for temperature and light control, and the equipment required for growth chambers. Scientifically, the workflow remains the same.

***Q** Where did the idea come from, and has it worked elsewhere?*

The concepts behind speed breeding draw on innovations from countries such as Australia and on space-biology experiments by NASA that studied germination and development under altered temperature and light regimes. Those experiments showed that flowering could be achieved in 30-35 days, which inspired the adaptation of the technique to multiple crops in India.

***Q** Is India already using speed breeding at other centres?*

Yes. Beyond IRRI Hyderabad, controlled-environment growth chambers or phytotron facilities exist at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, International Rice Research Institute South Asia Regional Centre (IRRI ISARC) at Varanasi, and the National Speed Breeding Crop Facility at the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI) at Mohali, among others. Currently, there are four to five centres in India with specialised chambers tailored to different crops, and we expect this network to expand as protocols are standardised.

Q What are the expected benefits for farmers?

The core benefit is the faster delivery of high-yielding, climate-resilient, and disease-tolerant varieties to farmers. Shorter development times mean we can respond more quickly to emerging pest pressures or climatic shifts and release suitable varieties for specific agro-ecologies sooner than before.

— Full interview on deccanchronicle.com

Kharif pulses sowing off to a weak start, acreage down 43%

Vishwanath Kulkarni
Bengaluru

A delayed and deficient monsoon has led to a weak start to kharif pulses sowing, with the coverage down 43 per cent as of June 12. Farmers in the key producing regions of Karnataka and Maharashtra are awaiting rain to take up sowing of pulses such as tur (pigeon pea), urad (black matpe) and moong (lentils), even as the delay has triggered concern among the growers.

As per Agriculture Ministry data released on Tuesday, tur has been planted on 0.09 lakh hectares (lh) till June 12 across the country, down 57 per cent over the same period last year, while urad has been seeded in some 0.27 lh, trailing last year's corresponding level of 0.35 lh by about 22 per cent. Moong has been planted on 0.69 lh, down 55 per cent from 1.54 lh.

"So far, there has been no rain. We are not sure whether the rain will arrive on time in the days ahead. Farmers are concerned about the delay in rain," said Basavaraj Ingin, President, Karnataka Pradesh Red Gram Growers Association in Kalaburgi, a key pulses-growing region in north-eastern Karnataka. The situation is similar in the adjoining parts of neighbouring Maharashtra, such as Latur and Solapur, and also in Telangana, where pigeon pea is grown, added Ingin.

THIRSTY CROPS. Farmers are awaiting rain in Karnataka and Maharashtra. As per IMD data, the country as a whole has received 32 per cent deficient rain till June 15 KK MUSTAFAH

32% DEFICIENT RAIN

As per IMD data, the country as a whole received 32 per cent deficient rain till June 15. Against a normal of 62.1 mm of rainfall, the country received 42.4 mm of rain during the period.

N Kalantri, a miller in Latur, said there that was no rain in the region, and sowing of tur is yet to start.

In some parts of Kalaburgi, where it rained a few weeks ago, farmers had taken up the sowing of moong.

"Even that early sown crop requires rain now to survive," Ingin said, adding that the government should start planning to rescue the farmers from the emerging situation.

Sowing of moong has taken place in parts of Gadag and Yadgir, wherever it has rained, but growers are waiting for a fresh spell to aid the crop growth, said Sujay Hubli, a miller in Gadag.

EL NINO CONCERN

"It is still a wait-and-watch situation, as there is a lot of uncertainty over rain," said Satish Upadhyay, Honorary Secretary, India Pulses and Grains Association (IPGA).

However, El Nino is a concern for the main pulses-producing states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan, he said.

Though sowing can be taken up till mid-July for crops like tur and matpe, the crop will get delayed, he said.

Upadhyay said the government is holding buffer stocks of 4.3-4.5 million tonnes of pulses, which should keep the prices under check.

UK FTA: India's most comprehensive agreement so far: Piyush Goyal

LONDON

THE UK–India Free Trade Agreement took centre stage at India Global Forum's Capital & Future Frontiers Forum, as Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Government of India, described it as the most comprehensive trade agreement India has entered into so far.

Held at One Moorgate Place, London, as part of the landmark 10th edition of UK–India Week, the Forum brought together senior ministers, business leaders, investors, founders, policymakers and technology experts to examine how the UK and India can translate the FTA and Vision 2035 into long-term economic growth, capital flows, innovation and commercial partnerships.

The opening fireside chat featured Hon Piyush Goyal and Rt Hon Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for Business and Trade and President of the Board of Trade, UK Government, setting the political and economic context for the next phase of the UK–India relationship.

A defining moment for UK–India trade

Speaking at the Forum, Piyush Goyal said, "Every trading relationship and every partnership stands on its own legs. The UK Free Trade Agreement is going to be the most comprehensive agreement that India has entered into so far, and it will come into force in July." His remarks positioned the UK–India FTA as a major milestone in India's global trade strategy and a platform for deeper bilateral cooperation across goods, services, investment, innovation and future industries. UK Business & Trade Secretary Peter Kyle said the agreement formed part of a broader reset in UK–India relations.

"The UK–India FTA was part of a comprehensive resetting of the relationship between Britain and India. When two leaders are so committed to something, and their rapport and relationship are so strong, it puts a rocket under us when it comes to breaking down barriers."

From ambition to execution

Addressing the gathering, Manoj Ladwa, Founder and Chairman, India Global Forum, reflected on the 10th anniversary of UK–India Week and the evolution of the bilateral relationship from goodwill and ambition to structured execution.

He highlighted that bilateral trade has grown from roughly £17 billion when UK–India Week began to nearly £48 billion today, with the FTA projected to increase bilateral trade further in the long run.

Capital, technology and the future economy

The Forum examined the forces reshaping the global economy, from capital and geopolitics to artificial intelligence, energy security, life sciences, semiconductors and the future of sport.

Sessions explored how deeper UK–India capital partnerships can move from episodic flows to more structured investment, how India can attract greater weight in global portfolios, and how both countries can build trusted collaboration in frontier technologies.

Speaking during a discussion on technology security, Kanishka Narayan MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for AI and Online Safety said, "Strategic autonomy isn't about building an island. It's about building bridges that make Britain stronger and give us greater leverage."

The Forum also examined the future of biotechnology and life sciences, with Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson, Biocon Ltd, highlighting the transformational role of AI. "Biotech is a huge opportunity because computational biology has never been at this scale before. AI has made a transformational difference to the way we look at life sciences."

India's growth story and global capital

Across the programme, senior leaders discussed opportunities in capital markets, clean energy, sport, compute, semiconductors, life sciences, advanced manufacturing and regional investment. Aryaman Birla, Director, Aditya Birla Group and Chairman Designate, Royal Challengers Bengaluru, spoke about the rise of world-class sporting franchises and the growing economic potential of sport as a serious investment category.

Kanubhai Desai, Finance Minister, Government of Gujarat, highlighted Gujarat's robust financial landscape and stable policy framework, reinforcing the state's position as one of India's most attractive destinations for long-term investment. The Forum closed with Rajan Bharti Mittal, Vice Chairman, Bharti Enterprises, who offered a powerful assessment of India's long-term growth proposition for global CEOs. "If India isn't on the agenda of every global CEO, I'd question that CEO. Where else do you find meaningful long-term growth? India is fundamentally a consumption story, powered by a young, educated middle class, manufacturing momentum and trust," Rajan Bharti Mittal said. He added that India offers investors long-term confidence through rule of law, democracy, independent regulators and a strong judiciary, positioning the country as a trusted partner for global business.

The next decade of UK–India opportunity

The Capital & Future Frontiers Forum reinforced a central message of UK–India Week 2026: the FTA is not the destination, but the platform for a new decade of investment, innovation and strategic partnership. The discussions built on earlier UK–India Week engagements in the West Midlands and at India House, including the Gujarat–West Midlands Steering Committee and Gujarat Future Forum, which focused on regional delivery, investment readiness and the practical implementation of the UK–India economic corridor

Maize farmers await dues

Payments pending even as Kharif season starts

JAMES EDWIN
KHAMMAM

Telangana Rythu Sangham recently staged a protest at MARKFED office in Khammam.

Even as the Kharif season has started, maize farmers in Agriculture Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao's native district of Khammam are still awaiting payments for the maize procured by the government.

A large number of farmers, who underwent numerous hardships while selling their maize during the procurement undertaken by Telangana Cooperative Marketing Federation Limited (MARKFED) in the district, are yet to be paid for the produce sold in the first week of April.

According to officials, around 50,000 farmers in the district have grown maize on about 1.81 lakh acres. Chintakani, Bonakal, Konijerla, Mudigonda and Raghunathapalem mandals produced the highest volume of maize. Telangana Rythu Sangham Khammam district secretary Bonthu Rambabu, speaking to Telangana Today, complained that the State government's failure to complete the payment process even after the Kharif season started showed its negligent attitude towards farmers.

An amount of Rs 684 crore is due from the government for 2.84 lakh metric tonnes of maize produced in the district, yet only Rs 384 crore has been released so far. The government must immediately release the pending Rs 300 crore, he demanded.

Rambabu insisted that the money must be credited into the bank accounts of the farmers rather than being adjusted against old bank loans, as they need money for the Kharif season agricultural investments. Nearly 20,000 farmers are yet to receive payments for the maize they sold, he said.

He wanted the authorities to ensure that farmers face no financial hardship during the peak agricultural season. It is sad that after waiting for three months to sell their maize produce, farmers are now forced to wait for two months for the sale proceeds, he lamented.

Kharif acreage down 23% as deficient monsoon begins to impact sowing

FARM SLOWDOWN. Area under all crops reported at 182.72 lakh hectares against 236.46 lakh hectares a year ago

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

A 42 per cent deficient monsoon (as of June 29) is impacting the kharif sowing. It is down 23 per cent, which is seen as the first signal of a possible lower production amid the Super El Nino forecast.

Though the monsoon has revived in some parts, its further advance will be keenly watched as July is the most crucial period for sowing most of the crops.

According to data, the coverage has reached 182.72 lakh hectares (lh) as of June 25, down from 236.46 lh a year ago. While sugarcane planting, which started much earlier but is considered under the kharif season, is the only one among major crops to show a rise in area, others such as paddy, arhar (pigeon peas), soyabean, groundnut, maize and cotton have reported a decline.

The current coverage so far is 16.5 per cent of the season's normal area of 1104.46 lh, whereas in the corresponding period a year ago, it was more than 21 per cent of the normal area.

Officials said the sowing period had just begun, and if the revival continues for a fortnight, there may be good progress in sowing activities, even if it may not keep pace with the year-ago level, as last year India had a good monsoon.

COTTON DOWN 35%

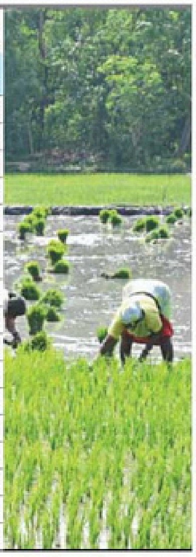
The kharif season's main cereal paddy has been transplanted in 25.75 lh against 34.41 lh a year ago, while pulses acreage reached 14.92 lh against 21.46 lh and that of oilseeds at 16.99 lh against 36.41 lh. The coverage of nutri/coarse cereals was reported 11.7 per cent lower at 31.84 lh against 36.41 lh.

Cotton acreage is 35 per cent lower at 29.66 lh from 45.36 lh, while soybean is down to 6.92 lh from 19.97 lh and groundnut to 8.87 lh from 15.29 lh. Among pulses, arhar sowing reached 3.56 lh, down from 8.45 lh, moong (green gram) 8.37 lh from 8.63 lh and urad (black gram) at 1.07 lh from 2.51 lh.

Kharif sowing* (lakh hectare)

	2025	2026	% change
Paddy	34.41	25.75	-25.2
Pulses	21.46	14.92	-30.5
Arhar	8.45	3.56	-57.9
Urdbean	2.51	1.07	-57.4
Moongbean	8.63	8.37	-3.0
Shri Anna cum Coarse cereals	36.07	31.84	-11.7
Jowar	2.70	3.38	25.2
Bajra	13.06	11.34	-13.2
Ragi	0.73	0.66	-9.6
Maize	18.61	15.71	-15.6
Oilseeds	36.41	16.99	-53.3
Groundnut	15.29	8.87	-42.0
Soybean	19.97	6.92	-65.3
Cotton	45.36	29.66	-34.6
Sugarcane	56.64	57.31	1.2
All Crops	**236.46**	**182.72**	**-22.7**

*As of June 25; Source: Agriculture Ministry



ERRATIC PROGRESS

Among the coarse/nutri cereals, only jowar area showed an improvement at 3.38 lh from 2.70 lh a year ago, whereas bajra dipped to 11.34 lh from 13.06 lh, ragi to 0.66 lh from 0.73 lh and maize to 15.71 lh from 18.61 lh.

The monsoon progress has been erratic since its onset on June 4. The India Meteorological Department on Monday said conditions were favourable for further advance of the South-West monsoon into more parts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, remaining parts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar, some parts of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the next two days.

उर्वरकों के साथ होर्मुज से आ रहे 4 जहाज

संजीव मुखर्जी
नई दिल्ली, 22 जून

अमेरिका-ईरान शांति समझौते पर हस्ताक्षर होने के बाद सोमवार देर शाम तक होर्मुज स्ट्रेट से लगभग 1.8 लाख टन उर्वरक एवं उर्वरकों के कच्चे माल ले जा रहे चार जहाज गुजर चुके हैं। वरिष्ठ सरकारी अधिकारियों ने यह जानकारी दी। उन्होंने बताया कि इसमें लगभग 92,250.07 टन यूरिया शामिल है।

सूत्रों ने बताया कि पश्चिम एशिया संघर्ष छिड़ने के बाद होर्मुज स्ट्रेट में कुल मिलाकर लगभग 3.3 लाख टन यूरिया और 2.2 से 2.5 लाख टन डीएपी (डाई-अमोनिया फॉस्फेट) के शिपमेंट फंसे हुए थे। शांति समझौते के बाद होर्मुज स्ट्रेट से गुजरने वाले 50,000 टन और 42,750 टन यूरिया ला रहे दो जहाज अगले कुछ दिनों में कृष्णपट्टनम और काकीनाडा बंदरगाहों पर लंगर डालने वाले हैं। इसी प्रकार 32,251 टन सल्फर और 55,000 टन डीएपी के साथ दो अन्य जहाज पारादीप और मुंद्रा बंदरगाहों पर पहुंचने वाले हैं।

एक अधिकारी ने कहा, 'इन जहाजों के आने पर माल को तुरंत उतारा जाएगा ताकि देश के मौजूदा उर्वरक भंडार में उसे शामिल किया जा सके और कृषि जरूरतों के लिए पर्याप्त स्टॉक सुनिश्चित किया जा सके।' अधिकारियों ने बताया कि संकट के बाद यानी 1 मार्च, 2026 से 21 जून, 2026 तक भारत की कुल उर्वरक बिक्री 1.53 करोड़ टन तक पहुंच गई जो पिछले साल की समान अवधि के मुकाबले लगभग 9.4 फीसदी अधिक है। इसमें 79 लाख टन यूरिया, 34.8 लाख टन एनपीकेएस और 19.8 लाख टन डीएपी शामिल हैं।

- सरकारी सूत्रों ने बताया कि ये जहाज 1.8 लाख टन उर्वरक एवं उर्वरकों का कच्चा माल ला रहे हैं
- 50,000 टन और 42,750 टन यूरिया ला रहे दो जहाज अगले कुछ दिनों में कृष्णपट्टनम और काकीनाडा बंदरगाहों पर लंगर डालने वाले हैं
- 32,251 टन सल्फर और 55,000 टन डीएपी ला रहे दो अन्य जहाज पारादीप और मुंद्रा बंदरगाहों पर पहुंचेंगे

सूत्रों के मुताबिक, संकट शुरू होने के बाद भारत का घरेलू उर्वरक उत्पादन बढ़कर 1.33 करोड़ टन हो गया और इस दौरान लगभग 43.6 लाख टन का आयात भी हुआ।

अधिकारियों ने बताया कि 17.7 लाख टन के हालिया वैश्विक निविदा के साथ भारत ने पश्चिम एशिया संकट शुरू होने के बाद अब तक लगभग 90 लाख टन यूरिया और जटिल उर्वरकों का आयात सफलतापूर्वक सुनिश्चित कर लिया है।

ईरानी तेल पर पाबंदी में छूट

अमेरिका के वित्त विभाग ने ईरान युद्ध खत्म करने के लिए हुए अंतरिम समझौते के तहत, ईरान के तेल पर लगे प्रतिबंधों में छूट देते हुए 60 दिन का लाइसेंस जारी किया है। यह लाइसेंस ईरानी तेल के उत्पादन, आपूर्ति और बिक्री की अनुमति देता है। यह 21 अगस्त तक लागू रहेगा। यह घटनाक्रम सोमवार को उस वक्त हुआ जब अमेरिका के उप राष्ट्रपति जेडी वेंस ने कहा कि स्विट्जरलैंड में ईरान के वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों के साथ उनकी लंबी बातचीत ने सफल अंतिम समझौते के लिए अच्छी नींव तैयार की है। वार्ताकार युद्ध को स्थायी रूप से खत्म करने की कोशिश कर रहे हैं जिसे अमेरिका और इजरायल ने फरवरी में शुरू किया था।

142 districts prone to paddy, maize yield loss

EL NINO IMPACT. 36 sorghum and millet districts susceptible

Prabhudatta Mishra
New Delhi

RISK MAPPING. The government's exercise flagged 77 districts in paddy, 65 in maize and 36 each in sorghum and millet as susceptible to rainfall shocks

The Union government's assessment of districts vulnerable to a possible El Nino impact this year is based on a historical analysis by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) of crop losses during previous El Nino years.

The ICAR has identified districts that had recorded at least a 10 per cent decline in production during the drought-bearing El Nino years of 2002, 2004 and 2009, creating a district-level vulnerability map for key rainfed crops.

The exercise flagged 77 districts in paddy, 65 in maize and 36 each in sorghum and millet as particularly susceptible to rainfall shocks associated with El Nino conditions.

The identification of these districts forms the basis of the Centre's preparedness strategy for the current monsoon season. The States have been advised to implement crop-specific contingency measures and agronomic interventions to minimise yield losses in the event of a significant rainfall deficiency.

The move suggests that the government's response is being guided not only by current weather forecasts but also by lessons drawn from the agricultural impact of previous El Nino episodes, particularly in major foodgrain-producing regions.

'2026 NOT COMPARABLE'

Official sources said these three years are crucial to understand the impact of monsoon as the rainfall deficit was 19 per cent in 2002, 13 per cent in 2004 and 23 per cent in 2009. In other El Nino years since 2002, the impact on monsoon was not much due to other factors.

The kharif season foodgrains (rice, nutri/course cereals and pulses) production in 2002 had dropped by over 22 per cent, and in 2004 and 2009 by 12 per cent, each.

However, a former Agriculture Secretary said the current year's situation is not comparable with these previous three years as there had been a major expansion of area under assured irrigation, mainly through groundwater.

Besides, the spatial distribution of rainfall needs to be monitored to see how it spreads out this year, which may not be same as on earlier occasions, he said, citing the instance of Odisha where the monsoon is predicted to be normal in most districts this year.

According to the ICAR's standard operating procedures (SPO) for 2026, "terminal drought generally coincides with reproductive stages and often led to severe yield reductions. In such situations, Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) will recommend applying life-saving irrigation, wherever possible, along with foliar nutrient applications, and prioritisation of cash crops in case of crop failures. Severely affected crops can be harvested as fodder."

SENSITISING STAKEHOLDERS

Sources said that ICAR's Hyderbad-based Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA) had started holding meetings with Agriculture Departments of the States to sensitise stakeholders on the potential impacts of El Nino and appropriate adaptation strategies, including contingency crop planning for managing mid-season and terminal droughts.

So far, it has held the first round of meetings with the major rice growers Bihar, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Assam, Punjab, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

'Seed pellet technology key to farming in low rainfall areas'

RySS honorary Vice-Chairman T Vijay Kumar and other officials visiting natural farming plots in Miduturu village on Wednesday

Hans News Service
Anantapur

T Vijay Kumar, honorary Vice-Chairman of Rythu Sadhikara Samstha (RySS) and retired IAS officer, stated that farmers can successfully grow crops even under low rainfall conditions by adopting seed pellet technology.

Accompanied by Chief Technical and Innovation Officer Lakshma Nayak, Vijay Kumar visited natural farming fields in Miduturu village of Pedda Vaduguru mandal on Wednesday.

The team inspected a cotton field of farmer Harikrishna, who achieved a second crop yield of 10 quintals per acre after pruning, sold at Rs 8,000 per quintal. They also reviewed multi-variety fodder crops grown by farmer Kambayya, compared BT and non-BT cotton varieties at Swathi Kumari's farm, and examined a two-acre Pre-Monsoon Dry Sowing (PMDS) field using seed pellets. Vijay Kumar urged farmers to widely adopt PMDS with seed pellets and follow the compact block approach by forming groups to enhance natural farming practices and improve productivity under uncertain weather conditions.

District-level official Suraj Kumar, Joint Director of Agriculture Sal Reddy, Assistant Director of Agriculture Venkat, farmers, and RySS functionaries were present.

Crop loss jitters as sowing at just 30% of target in state

Fate of kharif season rests on revival of monsoon

MANJUNATH HEGDE BOMNALLI
HUBBALLI, DHNS

SOWING IN RAIN-FED AREAS

(as of June 20) (in lakhs of hectares)

Crops	2025	2026	Target (2026 kharif)
Paddy	0.62	0.67	2.38
Jowar	0.22	0.16	0.51
Ragi	0.02	0.02	7.88
Maize	7.67	4.93	13.09
Tur	4.60	2.22	14.63
Black gram	0.64	0.44	0.74
Green gram	3.43	3.01	4.34
Avare	0.53	0.02	0.23
Others	0.58	0.71	2.49
Total	18.31	12.18	46.29

With rainfall remaining scanty during the initial phase of the monsoon, fears of severe crop losses are mounting in Karnataka, where sowing has covered only 30% of the seasonal target so far. The fear is intense in regions that have recorded better sowing progress, particularly rain-fed areas in northwestern Karnataka, as crops are drying up at the tender stage due to inadequate rainfall and sowing window for short-term crops is nearing its end.

As the sowing window typically closes between mid- and end-July, depending on the region, the fate of the kharif season now hinges on the timely revival of the monsoon.

With rainfall 43% below normal, sowing across the state has covered just 30% of the estimated 84.10 lakh hectares earmarked for the kharif season, compared to 42% during the corresponding period last year.

According to the Agriculture Department, only Dharwad, Gadag, Haveri, Belagavi and Bagalkot districts have achieved over 60% of their sowing targets.

Short-duration kharif crops sown in rain-fed areas are on the verge of failure. Farmers who began sowing after moderate rainfall in late May and early June now face losses if the dry spell persists for another week.

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'India & Greece discuss boosting trade & supply chain cooperation'

NEW DELHI: Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal held a productive meeting with Greece's Minister of Development Takis Theodorikakos to discuss strengthening economic ties, as per a statement by the Minister.

Taking to his X account he shared that he "Had a productive meeting with Mr. Takis Theodorikakos, Minister of Development of Greece."

Goyal said both sides discussed boosting the India-Greece economic partnership through greater trade, investment, industrial cooperation and resilient supply chains.

"Discussed strengthening the India-Greece economic partnership through greater trade, investment, industrial cooperation, and resilient supply chains," he said.

He added that the discussions also focused on expanding cooperation in manufacturing, start-ups and emerging technologies for mutual growth.

"We also explored opportunities to deepen collaboration in manufacturing, start-ups, and emerging technologies for the shared prosperity of both nations," he said.

In a further development, Goyal shared he met Haris Theoharis, Deputy Foreign Minister of Greece.

"We discussed expanding trade & investment cooperation, advancing maritime & connectivity partnerships, and exploring new opportunities in emerging sectors to further strengthen the India-Greece Strategic Partnership," he said in a social media post.

As per data shared by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, India and Greece are deepening economic ties, with both sides targeting a doubling of bilateral trade to $4 billion by 2030, supported by strategic cooperation, including under the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

Key trade flows include machinery, chemicals and textiles from India to Greece, and petroleum, aluminium and agricultural products from Greece to India. The two countries are also looking to expand investment collaboration in pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, agriculture and technology, alongside growing cooperation in connectivity, defence, digitalisation and tourism. ANI

FAO flags El Nino risk to India's crops, monsoon

UN body said the weather phenomenon raises risks for agri-dependent livelihoods

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With the new El Nino phase officially begun, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has warned that it may weaken India's summer monsoon, putting rainfed crops, including rice and maize, under stress during the critical kharif season.

The United Nations body said the weather phenomenon raises risks for agriculture-dependent livelihoods and food security in regions already in crisis.

"In Asia, the risk extends beyond fields to global markets. El Nino can weaken the summer monsoon across much of India, putting rainfed crops such as rice and maize under stress during the critical growing season," FAO said on its website.

Agricultural drought risk runs across South and Southeast Asia - from Pakistan and India through Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, and further east to the Philippines, Indonesia and Timor-Leste, it added.

The warning comes as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) forecasts a stronger-than-usual monsoon cycle. FAO's analysis draws on 41 years of historical satellite imagery to trace where strong El Nino events have caused the most severe agricultural drought.

The impact on India is a particular concern. During the 2015-16 El Nino, India's maize output fell by 4%, and rice production dropped by 1%. Across Southeast Asia, the same event led to losses of around 15 million tonnes of rice, pushing up prices and squeezing import-dependent countries.

"When rainfall falls short, agriculture is hit first. A farmer might first lose crops, then livestock and with that their entire livelihood," said Jorge Alvar-Beltrán, FAO's natural resources officer.

The agency cautioned that this cycle could prove more damaging than previous ones.

"This isn't like previous El Ninos. The planet is much warmer today, and with conflict and food insecurity widespread, this will hit hardest in places that are already vulnerable and have limited coping capacity," Alvar-Beltran said.

More than 80% of projected drought impacts are expected to fall on low- and middle-income countries.

REUTERS

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