

Centre eyes bumper wheat crop, 23% hike in procurement

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Govt on Wednesday estimated wheat procurement to be around 300-320 lakh tonne during the rabi marketing season, starting March 1, amid projection of a bumper winter crop this year. This will be around 23% more than the quantity procured last year and will be enough to meet the food security requirement and for future market interventions.

TOI learnt that food ministry estimated procurement after long deliberations with state food secretaries on Wednesday. Govt also estimated wheat production to be around 1,110 lakh tonne this year, slightly lower than last estimate. "We will keep reviewing the progress regularly with states. Additional procurement centres will be opened in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan to buy more wheat at MSP from farmers," an official said.

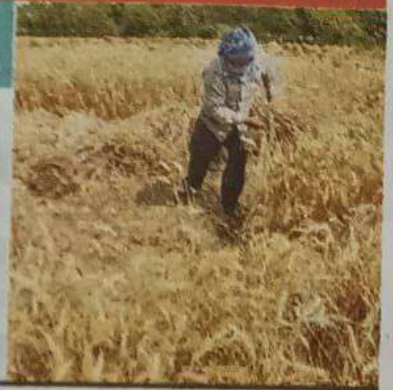
The increase in wheat procurement will bolster

FIELD REPORT

Govt wheat procurement & open market sale (in lakh tonnes)

Year	Procurement	Open market sale
2019-20	341	36
2020-21	390	25
2021-22	433	70
2022-23	188	33
2023-24	262	94
2025-26	300-320*	NA

*Estimated procurement



stock of Food Corporation of India (FCI), which has plummeted to an eight year low of around 100 lakh tonne because of less procurement during past two years because of a fall in production.

Sources said two major wheat producing states — Punjab and Madhya Pradesh — are estimated to procure around 130 lakh tonne and 80 lakh tonne respectively in the next marketing season, indicating MSP operations won't be impacted due to farmers' protest.

Uttar Pradesh, which will start buying wheat

from March 1, has estimated procurement of around 60 lakh tonne while procurement in Rajasthan and Bihar will start from March 10 and March 15 respectively. In MP, MSP operations will begin from March 22 while in Punjab and Haryana this will start from April 1.

Meanwhile, FCI has stopped weekly open market sale of wheat considering that the fresh crop will start arriving in mandis from next week and moderate the price. However, govt will continue selling Bharat Atta at subsidised price to consumers.

Manipur police commandos hold 'arms down protest' over attack on addl SP

Prabin Kalita | TNN

₹800cr tax loss risk due to unrest, says CM

Guwahati: Hundreds of Manipur police commandos from four districts went on an arms-down protest on Wednesday, in a symbolic demonstration denouncing the abduction and assault on an additional SP and indiscriminate firing by unidentified gunmen at the officer's home in Imphal the previous evening.

Commandos from Imphal West, Thoubal, Kakching, and Bishnupur districts participated in the protest, urging authorities to take decisive action against the attackers. Senior police officers held discussions with the protesters at their

Manipur CM N Biren Singh on Wednesday presented a vote-on-account, putting on hold a full budget until the Union budget is passed later this year, even as he admitted in his speech that the state faces risk of tax loss to the tune of about Rs 800 crore during the current year due to the unrest in the state, reports **Prabin Kalita**. This was decided for better coordination with the Centre as the state's fiscal capacity remains hit by the continuing strife.

respective bases.

"Around 200 armed miscreants came in vehicles and attacked the residence of Imphal West district additional SP Moirangthem Amit Singh. He and one of his escorts were abducted by the miscreants. They were later rescued and admitted to Raj Medicity for treatment," said a senior police officer.

Additional forces were promptly deployed, resulting in crossfire where civilians Rabinash Moirangthem (24) and Kangujam Bhimsen (20) suffered bullet wounds. "A case has been registered, and the investigation has started," police said.

CM N Biren Singh visited the wounded officer at the private hospital on Wednesday.

9 cr farmers get ₹21k cr under PM-Kisan scheme

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi Wednesday transferred more than Rs 21,000 crore directly to the bank accounts of more than nine crore landholder farmers across the country under the Centre's flagship income support scheme, PM-Kisan.

The 16th installment was remotely transferred by the PM through the direct benefit transfer (DBT) mode from a function in Yavatmal district, Maharashtra. Beginning April, farmers will be eligible for the next installment. The Centre can transfer the 17th installment of Rs 2,000 each to all eligible farmers as the ongoing scheme does not fall under the model code of conduct.

With this transfer, govt has, so far, disbursed over Rs 3 lakh crore to more than 11 crore eligible farmer families since the inception of the scheme in Feb, 2019. An analysis of the scheme shows that more than 85% of the total beneficiary farmers are those who have up to two hectares of land (marginal and small farmers).

Under PM-Kisan, financial assistance of Rs 6,000 per year in three equal instalments of Rs 2,000 each, every four months, is transferred into the bank accounts of each of landholder farmers' families across the country through DBT mode.

It was found that govt has added over 40 lakh new beneficiaries under PM-Kisan during the recent saturation campaign for the

Modi to virtually launch airstrip, jetty in Mauritius today

PM Modi and his Mauritius counterpart Pravind Jugnauth will jointly inaugurate a new airstrip and the St James Jetty, along with six community development projects, at Agalega Island in Mauritius on Feb 29 via video conferencing.

"The inauguration of these projects is a testimony to the robust and decades-old development partnership between India and Mauritius. The projects will fulfil the demand for better connectivity between mainland Mauritius and Agalega, strengthen maritime security and foster socio-economic development," said govt in a statement. TNN

central flagship schemes. One-fourth of the added beneficiaries were women landholder farmers.

Agriculture ministry data show that during the saturation drive Uttar Pradesh added the highest number of women farmers (1.69 lakh) in the list of beneficiaries, followed by Rajasthan (1.56 lakh), Manipur (1.05 lakh), Jharkhand (90,949), Kerala (66,887), Gujarat (48,952), Odisha (47,333) and Bihar (47,240).

Nationwide, 29.8 lakh male farmers were added to the list, followed by 10.6 lakh women farmers and 1,213 transgenders in the total added beneficiaries of 40.5 lakh farmers during the drive.

Civilian team reaches Maldives to replace Indian military personnel

MALE, Feb 28 (PTI)

AHEAD of the March 10 deadline for the withdrawal of Indian military personnel in the Maldives, an Indian civilian team has reached here to take charge of one of the three aviation platforms in the island nation, local media reports said on Wednesday.

"The civilian team to operate and maintain the aircraft has now arrived in Maldives. The Indian civilian team arrived in Addu early last night to complete the handover/takeover process," a news portal themaldivesjournal.com said quoting a statement by the Maldives Defence Ministry.

It is learnt that the Indian military personnel are expected to be replaced by civilians who have expertise in operating the three aviation platforms.

After a high-level meeting in Delhi on February 2 between the two sides, the Maldivian foreign ministry said India will replace its military personnel operating the three aviation platforms in the Maldives by May 10 and the first phase of the process would be completed by March 10.

It is learnt that the Indian military personnel are expected to be replaced by civilians who have expertise in operating the three platforms.

There are 88 military per-

sonnel manning the three Indian platforms that have been providing humanitarian and medical evacuation services to the people of the Maldives for the last few years using two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft.

The development comes days after Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu, widely seen as a pro-China leader, in his maiden address to Parliament on February 5 announced that the first group of Indian military personnel will be sent back

from the island nation before March 10.

The remaining Indians manning the two aviation platforms will be withdrawn by May 10 according to the agreement between the two countries. On Wednesday, the news portal also said, test flights will be held today (Wednesday), before the helicopter is taken to India for repairs. An Indian ship will dock in Addu on the 28th of this month carrying the replacement helicopter.

Further quoting the Defence Ministry statement, it said, the Indian troops will withdraw from the Maldives on the dates agreed upon by the two countries.