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1. Overflowing Godowns, Unhappy Millers: Why Punjab's paddy procurement has been delayed

Introduction

The paddy procurement process in Punjab has been marred by significant delays and mismanagement this year.

Despite favourable weather conditions, the pace of harvesting has slowed down due to almost 90% of the procured crop being stuck in mandis, and private rice millers refusing to store government paddy. This situation, stemming from a combination of logistical, bureaucratic, and political factors, is likely to worsen without swift intervention.

FARMERS PROTEST IN PUNJAB OVER DELAYED PADDY PROCUREMENT



How does paddy procurement work?

The Centre, in consultation with state governments and the Food Corporation of India (FCI), finalises estimates for paddy procurement every year prior to the commencement of the kharif marketing season (October to September).

State government agencies and the FCI purchase paddy from farmers within a stipulated period for the central pool at the Minimum Support Price (MSP). This paddy is milled, after which the procured rice is transported by the FCI to government storage facilities across the country. There it is stored for maintaining the buffer stock, or further distributed for consumption under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes.

What is the current status of paddy procurement in Punjab?

As of October 23, only 37.68 lakh tonnes of paddy has been procured by the FCI from Punjab, well below the 49 lakh tonne mark at the same time last year, and a far cry from the expected 185 lakh tonnes for the entire season. The peak procurement season ends in the first week of November.

The slow movement of procured paddy from the mandis (grain markets) is the biggest concern. While around half of the procured paddy had already been moved out of the mandis this time last year, this year a little more than a tenth of the procured paddy (10.55% or 8.7

lakh tonnes) has left the mandis. This is glut of paddy in the mandis is slowing down the entire procurement process.

What explains this situation in Punjab?

There are three primary factors at play.

Lack of storage space: Private rice millers are resisting taking in government paddy due to a space crunch in government godowns. Millers are concerned that they would themselves have to store this paddy for an entire year — something not many are keen to do.

This problem emanates from a previous one. Punjab, this year, could move only 7 lakh tonnes of the roughly 124 lakh tonnes of milled rice in its government godowns. This has left very little space in these godowns to store milled rice from this year.

Controversy around hybrids: Adding to the problem are certain privately-developed hybrid varieties that have seemingly inundated the market this year. Millers claim that these non-recommended hybrids are responsible for a lower milling out-turn ratio (OTR) than FCI standards demand, making them a loss-making proposition.

OTR refers to the proportion of rice that is extracted from paddy after the milling process. Millers have to deliver an OTR of 67% per quintal. If the out-turn is lower, they must pay the government for the difference. Millers say that the hybrids in question have an OTR of only 60% to 62%, leading to a loss of roughly Rs 300 per quintal .

Troubles from labour, arhtiyas: Arhtiyas (commission agents) are the middlemen in the grain procurement process. They are now demanding a compensation of 2.5% on crop purchase as opposed to the current system of fixed remuneration of Rs 46 per quintal. Mandi labourers too are seeking higher wages, comparable to their counterparts in Haryana. Protests by these groups have further stalled the procurement process.

What is the impact of the delay in paddy procurement?

* Only 22% of the paddy crop has been harvested so far — roughly 20% less than last year. Farmers are deliberately slowing down the harvest process because mandis simply do not have space to store their crop. They hope this would mitigate the risk of distress sales caused by the grain spoiling in poor storage conditions.

However, the longer paddy stands on the field, the greater the risk of weight loss and overall quality deterioration, which too leads to a fall in prices. This means that a persistent delay in paddy procurement will lead to significant economic distress among farmers.

* With farmers typically sowing the winter wheat crop in November, a delay in harvesting paddy also threatens to throw off the state's agricultural cycle. This too can be very damaging for the state's agriculture sector.

Moreover, a smaller window between harvesting paddy and sowing wheat is also likely to lead to more stubble fires, which lead to air pollution across much of North India.

* A prolonged crisis could also spark unrest among farmers. This could quickly spiral into a law and order problem for the state, which would further compromise Punjab's ability to manage the situation.

How can this crisis be managed?

The government urgently needs to find temporary storage solutions. The most readily available such solution would be to store paddy in Punjab's 5,000 odd rice mills. But to do this, the government must first address the millers' concerns which include OTR trials for hybrid varieties, and stricter regulation of seed certification.

Better coordination between procurement agencies, transportation networks, and storage facilities, as well as timely payment of arhtiya commissions, and addressing labour demands will also help in improving the procurement process.

In the long term, Punjab must diversify its crop base to avoid the problem of surplus which lies at the heart of the current crisis.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

2. Justice Sanjiv Khanna to be next CJI: How are Chief Justices of India appointed?

Introduction



CJI proposes Justice Sanjiv as his successor

The Centre recently appointed Justice Sanjiv Khanna as the next Chief Justice of India (CJI), formally approving the recommendation made by CJI D Y Chandrachud a week ago.

Justice Khanna, the seniormost judge in the apex court, will succeed CJI Chandrachud a day after the latter's retirement on November 10. He will hold the post for a little over six months until his retirement on May 13, 2025. CJI Chandrachud's two-year term is

among the longest in recent years.

What is the process for appointing the CJI?

By convention, the seniormost judge of the SC (based on years of experience as a judge in the apex court) becomes the CJI. This process has now been put down in the 'Memorandum of Procedure for the appointment of Supreme Court Judges' (henceforth, referred to as the MoP).

BASIS OF APPOINTMENT: The MoP says that the "appointment to the office of the Chief Justice of India should be of the seniormost Judge of the Supreme Court considered fit to hold the office". Even before the MoP was agreed upon in 1999, the seniormost judge of the Supreme Court after the CJI was by convention elevated to the top post.

HOW THE PROCESS BEGINS: According to the MOP, the appointment process begins when "The Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs would, at the appropriate time, seek

the recommendation of the outgoing Chief Justice of India for the appointment of the next Chief Justice of India". By convention, the "appropriate time" for the process to begin is a month before the date of retirement of the incumbent CJ. CJ Chandrachud sent his letter of recommendation to the Centre on October 17.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT APPROVAL: As per the process laid down in the MoP, "after receipt of the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India, the Union Minister of Law, Justice...will put up the recommendation to the Prime Minister who will advise the President in the matter of appointment". Though the final word on appointing the next CJ technically lies with the Centre, by convention the Centre tends to appoint whoever the presiding CJ recommends as her successor.

Table: The next in line to be Chief Justice of India

Since all SC judges have to retire at the age of 65, the length of a CJ's tenure depends on how old they are at the time of their predecessor's retirement. Here is a list of judges slated to be the CJ in the near future.

Judge	Date of assuming office (DD/MM/YY)	Retirement Date (DD/MM/YY)	Length of Tenure
Justice Sanjiv Khanna	11.11.2024	13.05.2025	184 days
Justice B R Gavai	14.05.2025	23.11.2025	194 days
Justice Surya Kant	24.11.2025	09.02.2027	443 days

Note: The dates in the table above work on the assumption that each of these judges will be the seniormost judge in the SC when they assume the office of CJ. The above information may change based on any changes in convention, early resignation, or loss of life.

Has there ever been a departure from the convention of appointing the seniormost SC judge as the CJ?

Yes. This convention was famously discarded by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, whose government recommended the appointment of Justice A N Ray as CJ in 1973, superseding three more senior judges, Justices J M Shelat, K S Hegde, and A N Grover.

Justice Ray was considered to be more favourably disposed towards the Indira government than his more senior colleagues. His appointment was announced the day after the Supreme Court pronounced a landmark order in the Kesavananda Bharati case, which laid down the "basic structure" doctrine. Justice Ray was part of the minority in the 7-6 verdict of the 13-judge Bench.

Indira's government, in January 1977, once again ignored the convention by superseding Justice H R Khanna to appoint Justice M H Beg as the CJ. Justice Khanna had been the lone dissenter in the ADM Jabalpur vs Shiv Kant Shukla order, in which the majority comprising Justices A N Ray, P N Bhagwati, Y V Chandrachud, and M H Beg agreed with the government

that fundamental rights including the right to life and liberty stood abrogated during a period of national Emergency.

How did the MoP come into existence?

Following the apex court's decisions in the First Judges Case (1981), Second Judges Case (1993), and the Third Judges Case (1998), a peer selection process for the appointment of High Court and SC judges was put in place by establishing what we now know as the Supreme Court Collegium. This Collegium comprises the seniormost judges of the SC, and the Centre is technically bound to accept its recommendations.

The MoP — first drawn up in 1999 — provides the procedure for appointment and obligations of the Centre, the SC, and the High Courts when it comes to the appointment process. This document is crucial as the Collegium system of appointing judges is a judicial innovation that is not mandated through legislation, or text of the Constitution.

In 2015, the SC struck down the constitutional amendment that brought in the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC). This would have allowed the Centre to have greater influences in the process of recommending judges. Following this decision, the MoP was renegotiated in 2016, although the government maintained until last year that it was still being finalised.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

3. How mangroves in Odisha likely reduced Cyclone Dana's impact

Introduction

Cyclone Dana, which made landfall close to Bhitarkanika National Park and Dhamra Port in Odisha at 3.30 am on Friday, did not cause significant damage as many had feared. Although efforts by state authorities helped limit the devastation — for instance, Odisha evacuated one million people to cyclone shelters — there was one non-human factor that also played a crucial role. It was the rich mangrove forest cover of Bhitarkanika.



What are mangroves?

Mangroves are salt-tolerant trees and shrubs typical of estuarine and intertidal regions, meaning they grow in areas where freshwater and saltwater meet. Mangroves typically have aerial, breathing roots and waxy, succulent leaves, and are flowering plants. The Sundarbans (spread across India and Bangladesh) is the largest contiguous

mangrove forest in the world. Mangrove seedlings called propagules germinate on the parent tree before falling into the waters and growing into a mangrove tree again.

Red mangrove, *Avicennia marina*, grey mangrove, rhizophora etc. are some common mangrove trees. Abundant in swampy and marshy areas, mangroves represent a littoral forest ecosystem, which means they thrive in saline or brackish waters in coastal regions.

In India, many locations boast of mangroves. The Godavari Krishna delta in Andhra Pradesh, Bhitarkanika in Odisha, mangrove forests in Andamans, Kerala, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, etc., are some examples.

How do mangroves protect against cyclones?

When cyclones strike, mangrove forests act as a barrier against storm surges — a change in sea level caused by a storm, usually leading to large waves — by obstructing the water flow with their roots, husks, and leaves, according to a report published by the World Bank Group. A different report by the group revealed that some of the mangrove species such as *Sonneratia apetala* “reduced the surge height from 4 cm to 16.5 cm with 50 m to 2 km wide mangrove strips, and reduced the water flow velocity from 29% to 92% with 50 m or 100 m wide mangrove forests”.

When mangroves are combined with built infrastructure, the impact of a cyclone can further be reduced. For instance, planting mangroves in front of an embankment can decrease water flow velocity, the report said.

How vast is Bhitarkanika’s mangrove forest cover?

Currently, Odisha has a reserve of a mangrove forest area of 231 square kilometres with a major chunk lying in Bhitarkanika. It stands second only to Sundarbans in West Bengal. Besides Bhitarkanika in Kendrapara, the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jagatsinghpur and Puri are also home to mangroves, otherwise known as coastal woodland.

While 82 sq km area in Bhitarkanika is densely mangrove-infested, 95 sq km area has moderate mangrove forest. The coastal patches spread across 672 sq km were declared the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary in 1975. The core area of the sanctuary, with an area of 145 km, got the National Park tag in September 1998.

The park has withstood the onslaught of several cyclones in the past including the Super Cyclone, which took place in October 1999.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

4. What is the livestock census and why is it conducted?

Introduction

Rajiv Ranjan Singh, the Union Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, recently launched the 21st Livestock Census in New Delhi.

What is the livestock census all about?

Conducted every five years, the census carries out a headcount of the number of domesticated animals, poultry, and stray animals in the country. The census takes into account information about the species, breed, age, sex, and ownership status of the animals in question.



Since 1919, a total of 20 livestock censuses have been carried out so far, with the last being conducted in 2019. The enumeration process for the 21st census will take place between October 2024 to February 2025.

Over the next few months, some 87,000 enumerators will visit each and every independent house, apartment, and enterprise, as well as institutions such as gaushalas (cattle sheds), dairy farms, poultry farms, veterinary colleges, and defence establishments, to gather information about livestock in India. The

census is expected to cover 30 crore households in India.

Which animals will be counted in the 21st census?

According to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, information on sixteen animal species will be collected in the 21st census. These include: cattle, buffalo, mithun, yak, sheep, goat, pig, camel, horse, ponies, mule, donkey, dog, rabbit, and elephant. In total, the census will capture information on 219 indigenous breeds of these sixteen species recognised by ICAR-National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR).

Besides these, the census will also carry out a headcount of poultry birds such as fowl, chicken, duck, turkey, geese, quail, ostrich, and emu.

What is the objective of the livestock census?

The livestock sector plays an important role in providing employment to people in rural areas. In terms of productivity, especially in the agriculture sector, poultry and animal husbandry contributes to roughly 30% of the Gross Value Added (GVA). In the economy overall, the livestock sector's GVA stands at roughly 4.7%. For comparison, the whole agriculture sector contributes to a GVA of roughly 15%. GVA refers to the total output of a sector minus the cost of intermediate consumption.

Among other things, the data of the census will be used to estimate GVA from the livestock sector. It will also help formulate and implement policies relating to the census. "Livestock Census shapes policies, ensures sustainable growth of India's Livestock Sector," Union Minister Singh said while launching the census exercise.

The data from the census will also be crucial to track progress of achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. The Livestock Census will provide data pertaining to Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), and Target 2.5 (to maintain genetic diversity in food and

nutrition), specifically Indicator 2.5.2 (The percentage of local livestock breeds that are at risk of extinction) of the SDGs.'

How will the 21st livestock census be different from the previous exercises?

The census this time will be fully digitised, like the last one in 2019. This will include "online data collection through a mobile application, monitoring at various levels through a digital dashboard, capturing the latitude and longitude of data collection location, and generation of livestock census report through software."

The 21st census will capture several new data points. These include:

- **Data on pastoral animals, pastoralists:** The census will, for the first time, collect data on the contribution of pastoralists to the livestock sector, their socio-economic status, and livestock holding.

- **More details, granular information:** The census will find out the proportion of households whose major income comes from the livestock sector. It will also contain data on the gender of stray cattle.

What did the 2019 Livestock Census find?

535.78 million was the total livestock population of India. This included:

- 192.9 million cattle
- 148.88 million goats
- 109.85 million buffaloes
- 74.26 million sheep
- 9.06 million pigs

All other animals taken together contributed just 0.23% of the total livestock population in India.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express