

Untimely rain continues, farmers count their losses

Downpour, hailstorm may recede from today, but likely to return

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Unseasonal rainfall, accompanied by strong winds and hailstorm, continued to lash vast swathes of North and Central India on Monday, increasing the anxiety of wheat growers who were about to harvest their standing crop. And the government, which has been trying hard to tame inflation for a while now, also took note of it.

It acknowledged on Monday that there has been some damage to the crop, but added that there is no concern about mustard and chickpea (chana) crops which have been harvested. The weather has taken an about turn in the last few days.

Earlier, experts were concerned about a drop in wheat yield due to the heat wave. And on Monday, mercury in several states registered a considerable dip due to continuous rain — which also poses a threat to mustard, chana, sugarcane, seasonal vegetables and horticulture crops.

The government also said that localised hail storms might have affected some horticulture crops like banana and potato. But the good news is that the weatherman suggests that the rains will recede from Tuesday onwards. India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted significant reduction in rainfall, thunderstorm and hailstorm activities over North-west and East India from Tuesday.

But, another weather system is developing which might cause another round of unseasonal rain and hailstorm from March 24 onwards over Punjab, Haryana, western UP, North Rajasthan and Delhi.

"This new bout of rain will be due to another western disturbance that is expected to develop from March 23 night," Mahesh Palawat, vice president meteorology and climate change in private weather forecasting agency Skymet, told *Business Standard*.

The biggest impact of the rain and hail-



Farmers under the banner of Samyukt Kisan Morcha during Kisan Mahapanchayat, at Ramila Maidan in New Delhi on Monday

PHOTO: PTI

Fulfil written promises: Farmers to govt

Farmers from different states gathered at Delhi's Ramila Maidan here on Monday demanding that the government fulfil the "written commitments" it made to them in December 2021.

The farmers have converged under the banner of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), a grouping of farmer unions, that led around a one year-long agitation at Delhi borders and forced the government to withdraw the farm laws.

Later in the day, a 15-member delegation of SKM also met agriculture minister Narendra Singh Tomar in the capital and submitted their charter of

demands. Their demands include a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP), withdrawal of cases registered against farmers, compensation to families of farmers who died during the protest, pension, debt waiver, and withdrawal of the Electricity Bill.

"There are several unresolved issues and these demand another 'andolan'. We will convene another meeting on April 30 in Delhi. I ask all farmers unions to take out rallies in their respective states and hold panchayats in the run-up to the meeting," farmer leader Darshan Pal said.

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storm is expected on standing wheat crops particularly those which had ripened and were ready for harvest.

"Early sown wheat crops in Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan have been impacted in the rain which will deteriorate the seed quality and might result in pushing up prices of good quality wheat," said Rahul Chauhan, commodity analyst at iGrain India.

"All over MP, farmers are aggressively harvesting wheat and the recent bout of rains will bring down the quality which will fetch less price in the markets," said

Bhagwan Meena, founder member of Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Mahasangh, a Madhya Pradesh based farmers group.

For the last few days, state governments have also swung into action assuring farmers of compensation for the damages suffered and promised to undertake surveys to assess the loss.

In UP, CM Yogi Adityanath directed officials to undertake surveys to assess the loss and promptly compensate the farmers, while in Gujarat, Chief Minister Rupendra Patel held a high-level meeting on Sunday to review the situation.