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New foodgrains scheme launched

Staff Correspondent

DEHRA DUN: Bharatiya Janata Party president Nitin Gadkari on Friday launched the 'Atal Khadyann Yojna' that provides foodgrains at highly subsidised rates to BPL and APL ration card holders. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, former Chief Minister B. C. Khanduri and Congress leader and former Chief Minister N.D. Tiwari were present at the ceremony.

Congratulating Mr. Nishank for making foodgrains available at low rates to every household, Mr. Gadkari said true Ram Rajya as visualised by Mahatma Gandhi could be achieved only when the benefits of the scheme reach the targeted poor and not get siphoned off by the corrupt. "A similar scheme had worked wonders in Chhattisgarh and Uttarakhand should ensure replication of the Chhattisgarh model."

All praise for the scheme, Mr. Tiwari said his blessings and good wishes were with Mr. Nishank.

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Scheme to stop depletion of fish species

Staff Reporter

Low-cost initiative of Ponnani college students Fish feed for different stages also developed

MALAPPURAM: The Department of Aquaculture and Fishery Microbiology at the MES Ponnani College has launched a project to conserve some of the indigenous fish varieties facing depletion.

Even when experts speak of conservation, a few enterprising scholars of the college developed and implemented a low-cost technology for conservation of indigenous fish, winning praise from several quarters, including the State Department of Fisheries.

The head of Veliyankode grama panchayat inaugurated the project by releasing the first batch of indigenous fingerlings (young fish) in the Naranipuzha near Changaramkulam on Thursday. The fingerlings of 'Puntius filamentosus' or filamentous barb locally known as 'poovali paral' were developed by students of the Department of Aquaculture and Fishery Microbiology.

"We made the initiative for indigenous fish conservation by developing a larval rearing technology," said S. Suresh Kumar, head of the project.

Dr. Suresh said that using the low-cost technology, they successfully bred three varieties of indigenous fish in glass tanks with natural stimulants, and reared them in cement tanks under controlled condition. They also developed the fish feed for different stages. Apart from filamentous barb, the fingerlings of olive barb ('Puntius sarana') locally known as 'kuruva paral' and Indian flying barb ('Esomus danricus') locally called 'meesa paral' were reared as part of the project.

Dr. Suresh said what they developed was a kind of backyard low-cost hatchery technology. "It can help produce fingerlings of different indigenous fish varieties for commercial-level mass production as well," he said.

Dr. Suresh was assisted by T.S. Arunjith, student investigator of the project.

“Even though the number of young fish we released into the river was not huge, this project can go a long way in helping to prevent depletion of indigenous fish varieties in the local habitat,” they said.

“We often hear people speak of conservation. But little is done in effect. This project indeed is a great initiative to conserve our indigenous fish,” Mr. Arunjith said.

Dr. Suresh said that indiscriminate fishing, use of pesticides, dumping of waste and reclamation of water bodies were leading to depletion of indigenous fish varieties.

He said conservation of those fish could be achieved by protecting its natural habitat, releasing of young ones produced in hatcheries to natural habitats and moving the fish from a destructed habitat to an artificial habitat.

Congratulating the college team, Deputy Director of Fisheries V.K. Mansoor said that similar initiatives should be made by others also.

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Spices Park to offer facilities for storing, marketing

A Correspondent



The Spices Park at Puttady in Idukki district,

KATTAPPANA: With the inauguration of the Rs.30-crore Spices Park at Puttady in the district on Sunday, a long-cherished dream of the cardamom and pepper farmers is becoming a reality. Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Anand Sarma will inaugurate the Spices Park.

The park, set up with the aim of bringing under a single umbrella the treatment, storing and marketing of cardamom and pepper, has all modern facilities. It has facilities for e-auction of cardamom, colour-grading and sorting and has a modern godown. The park will also provide marketing facilities for value-added products. Loans will be made available on the basis of stocked product.

The park also has treatment facilities for white pepper and equipment for cleaning and making of value-added products.

The park is controlled by a Trust created under the Spices Board chairman.

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Progressive farmers felicitated

Special Correspondent



Achievers:Winners of 'Krishi Pandit' and 'Krishi' awards who were felicitated in Bangalore on Friday.

Bangalore: The Karnataka State Government Employees' Association (KSGEA) on Friday felicitated 34 farmers who received the "Krishi Pandit" and "Krishi" Awards in 2008-09, at the Banquet Hall of the State Secretariat.

Minister for Home and Transport R. Ashok and Minister for Agriculture Umesh Katti felicitated the "progressive" farmers, who have adopted innovative farming methods, better water management methods and growing high yielding variety of crops.

Mr. Katti said the Government had decided to hold a Global Investors' Meet in agri-business in June to attract investment in the farm sector.

For the first time, Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa had decided to bring out a separate booklet on agricultural during his presentation of the State Budget on February 24.

Welfare of farmers was a priority and several schemes would be announced in the budget, he said.

Earlier speaking to presspersons, Mr. Katti said a decision had been taken to adopt for one year farmlands of 1.5 lakh Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families, who owned less than one hectare.

The Government would adopt lands and develop them in a year, he added.

Mr. Ashok said that several demands of government employees had been met over the years. The retirement age of employees had been raised from 58 to 60 years. A decision would be taken soon on implementation of pay scales of the Sixth Pay Commission, he added.

Mr. Ashok and Mr. Katti release two books written by Thotanahalli G. Chowdaiah.

KSGEA president L. Byrappa submitted a memorandum to Mr. Ashok and appealed to the Government to concede the demands of over six lakh employees. Officials of the Agriculture Department were present.

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Pawar wants fair deal for farmers

Correspondent

Kolhapur: Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said on Monday that while big industrialists were getting crores of rupees of loans waived every year, loan waiver for farmers was not an obligation. He was speaking at Kagal in Kolhapur district. He said people should not complain when fair prices were given to farm produce. He asked banks to come forward to provide adequate credit to farmers with minimum interest.

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Workshop on agri development

ERODE: The Agricultural Technical Management Agency of the Department of Agriculture will conduct a three-day workshop on Development of Agriculture and an exhibition at the Malligai Arangam from February 22.

Experts from various parts of the State would deliver lectures on new cultivation techniques.

Agriculture, horticulture, sericulture and other related departments would establish stalls in the exhibition, Collector T. Soundiah said in a press release.

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Dairy farmers seek procurement price hike

Coimbatore: The Coimbatore District Milk Producers' Welfare Association has urged the State Government to increase the procurement price of milk.

In a statement issued here, patron of the association S.R. Rajagopal said that given the cost of cattle feed, the present procurement prices would not be viable for the dairy farmers.

The farmers had already sought a hike of Rs. 5 per litre of cow's milk and Rs. 8 per litre of buffalo's milk.

In the talks held at Chennai in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister on January 4, 2011, the government announced a hike of Rs. 1.10. The quantum of hike will not be adequate and dairy farmers might find it unviable, he added.

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Farmers plan indefinite siege of Delhi

Gargi Parsai



Mahendra Singh Tikait

NEW DELHI: Thousands of farmers intend to lay an indefinite siege to Delhi next month to draw government attention to issues such as high input costs and acquisition of farm land for industrialisation. They will be led by Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Mahendra Singh Tikait.

“Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has not found time to meet us even once in the last three years though we have sought time from him at least seven times,” said BKU leaders from Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and other parts of the country announcing the March 9 siege here on Friday.

Addressing a joint press conference here, the leaders said not once had the government consulted “real farmers” about the problems afflicting the farm sector. “Even for the budget consultations, the government just spoke to agri-businesses or representatives of industry and political parties,” they complained.

They want a separate budget for agriculture on the lines of the Rail budget and also a nodal ‘single window’ Ministry that addresses all farming needs including credit, land, water, fertilizer, seeds, foodgrains, horticulture, dairying, technology and farm equipment.

Pressing for implementation of the M.S. Swaminathan report on setting the minimum support price (MSP), farmer leaders Ajmer Singh Lakhwal, Rakesh Tikait, Gurnam Singh, Yudhvir Singh said MSP for farm commodities should be 50 per cent higher than “well-calculated” input costs to enable farm families to eke out a decent living.

They want the 1894 Land Acquisition Act to be replaced with a new Act that protects fertile farm land from acquisition for industrial use and clearly defines land use for “public purpose.”

Farmers burdened

The leaders said that the interest on farm credit should be four per cent as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission. Instead, at some places, banks were compounding interests every six months heaping hardship on farmers who are already not receiving remunerative price for their produce.

BKU representatives demanded cancellation of all Free Trade Agreements, which they said hurt farmers' interests.

Not only BKU units from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Bihar, but farmers organisations from Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh too will participate in the “gherao” of the capital on March 9.

Rail traffic to be spared

Roads coming to Delhi shall be blocked at Saharanpur, Ghaziabad, Palwal, Gurgaon, Bahadurgarh and Sonipat. There will, however, be no disruption of rail traffic.

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Milk procurement increases

Staff Reporter

KRISHNAGIRI: Even though the indefinite strike by the milk producers entered fifth day on Friday, the procurement of milk from the Primary Milk Cooperative Societies increased by 22,828 litres than Thursday.

G. Nainappan, General Manager, Aavin, told The Hindu on Friday that the situation had improved.

Meeting

Meanwhile, the office-bearers of the farmers' associations and milk manufacturers will meet on Saturday morning to chalk out next course of agitation.

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Automatic weather unit for Meenambakkam

K. Lakshmi

As part of modernisation project

— Photo: K.Pichumani.



The observatory in Meenambakkam will soon have an automated weather station as this one in Regional Meteorological Centre in Nungambakkam.

CHENNAI: The Regional Meteorological Centre, Chennai, will install an automatic weather unit at Meenambakkam in about two months as part of its modernisation project, which aims to improve weather monitoring facilities.

Officials of the Meteorological Department said the “automatic weather station” would have sensors to measure six parameters: temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, wind speed, wind direction and rainfall. At present, data from the manual observatory in Meenambakkam is being used for forecasting weather.

This will be one of the 14 automatic weather stations to be set up across the State. Each costing Rs.4 lakh to 5 lakh will require an area of 180 sq.m. It will update information on an hourly basis.

Y.E.A. Raj, Deputy Director General of Meteorology, RMC, Chennai, told The Hindu that the information would be updated on the website, www.imdaws.com. The city's first automatic weather station was installed at the RMC in Nungambakkam four years ago.

The department set up two more in the suburbs of Madhavaram and Ennore recently. With the new automated weather stations to be installed, the State would have 42 such facilities, he said.

Automatic rain gauges

For the first time in the city, the department would create a mesoscale network of satellite-based automated rain gauges to cover areas within the radius of 5 km. In the first phase, 10 such facilities would be installed in various localities of the city in about four months.

The localities where such rain gauges are to come up are Chembarambakkam, Avadi, Kolapakkam, Puzhal, Anna University, Taramani, Pallikaranai and Tambaram. The department is in the process of selecting one more site.

More automatic rain gauges are being set up as rainfall is a highly variable parameter across the city. The facilities would help in monitoring spatial variability in rainfall and assimilating accurate collection of rainfall data in different areas, said an official. These rain gauges would also have sensors to measure temperature and humidity.

At present, the staff of Meteorological Department and of other government agencies such as Water Resources Department, manually measure the rainfall in facilities set up in some parts of the city.

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Farmers' bid foiled

Staff Reporter

KANCHEEPURAM: Tension prevailed for sometime on Thursday at Kaverirajapuram near Thiruvalangadu in Tiruttani taluk, Tiruvallur district, after a group of members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam and other farmers' associations attempted to enter the poromboke land in the village allegedly to distribute it to the landless people.

According to police, a group of persons, led by the State president of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, K. Balakrishnan, the State president of the Vivasaya Thozhilalargal Sangam, S.Thirunavukkarasu and the district secretary of the All India Kisan Sang, Tiruvallur, Tulsi Narayanan, assembled at Kaverirajapuram and attempted to enter the poromboke land near the land reportedly held in the name of Justice P.D. Dinakaran and his associates.

Social activists such as the State general secretary of the All India Democratic Women Association, U. Vasugi, and others participated in the 'land distribution movement'.

The officials prevailed upon the demonstrators and successfully convinced them to have a dialogue with Collector T.P. Rajesh at the Collectorate in Tiruvallur in the afternoon. The district

administration, which clarified that a conclusion report on the issue of encroachment of the poromboke land by Mr. Justice P.D. Dinakaran and his associates, was to come out in about 30 days, asked the agitators to remain calm till that time.

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It will be a field day for farmers

Staff Reporter

Jaanuvaru, Kukkuta and Matsya Mela to be held on Saturday and Sunday

Over 100 stalls will showcase several breeds of livestock

Bangalore: Poultry, livestock and fish farmers have a weekend to look forward to.

The “Jaanuvaru, Kukkuta and Matsya Mela-2011” will showcase a variety of breeds, technology and offer expert advice to farmers.

The fair is organised by the Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University on its regional campus at Hebbal on Saturday and Sunday.

Over 100 stalls will showcase several breeds of cows, buffaloes, sheep, goats, pigs, camels, rabbits, pet animals, inland and ornamental fishes, poultry and even emu. Along with it will be information on animal and poultry feed and technologies related to their rearing. Pharmaceutical companies will have stalls at the mela too.

For those who do not necessarily rear animals but are interested in purchasing produce, the exhibition will have on sale value-added milk products.

A demonstration unit of integrated animal husbandry activities will be set up at the mela.

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Panel for revamping crop data collection

Gargi Parsai

Highlights deficiencies in area and crop yield estimation Calls for expansion of remote sensing programme

NEW DELHI: The Vaidyanathan Committee of Experts on Agricultural Statistics has recommended restructuring of the methodology for collection of farm statistics in a phased manner to ensure objective, reliable and timely estimates of crop areas and yields.

It has suggested setting up of a National Crop Statistics Centre (NCSC) as the nodal agency to undertake the work in collaboration with the Departments of Agriculture and Space.

The primary responsibility of such a centre will be to provide reliable and timely estimates of area under major crops through complete enumeration of plots in selected sample villages and of the crop yields based on properly conducted crop cutting experiments at the State and Central levels.

The experts' panel, headed by Professor A. Vaidyanathan, was constituted in 2009 to study the system of working out agricultural statistics and to recommend improvements.

It submitted its final report to Agriculture Secretary P.K. Basu here on Friday. It had given its interim recommendations along similar lines last July.

Highlighting the deficiencies in the area and crop yield estimation in the current system, the report said there were "serious lacunae" in institutional arrangements to collect, supervise and validate basic data on a large scale on diverse crops.

“The immediate focus, therefore, should be on putting in place an institutional arrangement that would provide reliable and timely data needed for monitoring agricultural trends and for policy making at the State and national levels,” the report pointed out.

Emphasising the need for expansion of the present remote sensing programme, the committee said the evaluation agency should be able to provide reliable and validated in-season forecasts and end-season estimates of area for a wider range of crops, as well as give comprehensive and detailed plot level data of land use and crops at the village level. The committee also suggested strengthening of the Directorate of Economics and Statistics for effective implementation of the recommendations of the Committee.

The 14-member panel was set up to look into the problems relating to the methodology and procedures for the collection and estimation of data on land use, cropping and yields.

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Forester killed in honeybees' attack

Staff Reporter

A forest guard, four others accompanying him to Pakidi jungles injured

They enter the forest to take up plantation work The forest official dies on way to hospital

BERHAMPUR: A forester, Chintamani Swain, was killed in an attack by honeybees in Pakidi jungles on Friday morning. A forest guard and four menial labourers accompanying him were also injured by a swarm of honeybees. Pakidi jungle is famous for its peacock habitat. According to Ghumusar (south) Divisional Forest Officer R.C. Sethy, both the forest personnel entered the forest to take up plantation work on a hill.

Accidentally they disturbed a large beehive and a swarm of bees attacked them. Swain,

who was seriously injured, became unconscious. By the time the forest guard accompanying him could call up villagers to rescue the forest guard it was too late. Swain died on way to hospital.

As per medical experts, in the persons who are allergic to bee stings, they may trigger a dangerous anaphylactic reaction, which can prove to be lethal.

Doctors suspected it could be the reason behind the death of the forester. It was suspected that the forest official may have accidentally injured some honeybees that stung him. Injured bees inject apitoxin into their victim and along with it they also release alarm pheromones from their body. Release of alarm pheromones usually attracts swarm of bees from nearby areas to attack the victim. Swain had fallen prey to such a situation.

Attack on devotees

On September 10, 2008, a group of around 40 'kawariays' were injured by honeybees near Maulabhanja village in Ganjam district. A large group of these 'kawariays' had gathered on the coast of the river flowing by the village to collect water for worship of lord Shiva on last Monday of the Hindu month of Shravan. But the rituals related to it had proved dangerous for these devotees. Fumes emitted from the 'yagna' conducted by the devotees irritated the honeybees who had their hives on trees near the river bank.

The irritated bees attacked the devotees. Five of them were seriously injured.

Paddy takes a beating



Farmers thresh harvested paddy in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvarur district on Thursday. Prices of the ADT 36 variety at the Thiryagadurgam market in Villupuram, stood at Rs 885 a quintal, against Rs 1,052 a quintal at the same period last year. — M. Srinath

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated February 12, 2011)

Harrisons Malayalam net falls 12% despite record rubber prices

Kochi Feb. 11:

Due to increased allocation to developmental works, the net profit of Harrisons Malayalam Ltd has declined 12 per cent to Rs 5.57 crore during October-December 2010. However, the total income grew by 12 per cent to Rs 95.03 crore (Rs 85.15 crore).

The company could not reap the full benefit of the record price of rubber which grew to an average of Rs 209.87 this quarter against Rs 119.57 last year on account of lower crop.

Incessant rains into December had resulted in a significant fall in production, Mr Pankaj Kapoor, Managing Director of HML, said. But the situation has turned around and production for December and January has been good and the prices have ruled even higher, he added.

Diversion of rubber acreage for replanting has also reduced production. A sharp fall in tea prices

by over 18 per cent and a drop in tea production by five per cent during the quarter offset the gains made in rubber. Tea prices fell from Rs 93 per kg in Q3 last year to Rs 69 this year. But the prices have begun to look up as the country expects a lower production this year. Prices have also risen handsomely to Rs 79 per kg in January.

Replanting expenditure

Developmental activities such as replanting of rubber and infilling and replanting in tea have been taken up on a war footing. An amount of Rs 3.38 crore has been expended on these activities against Rs 1.37 crore last year. The benefits of these exercises are expected to manifest in the coming years. Given the firm price trends for both rubber and tea, the company expected to do better during the current quarter.

The company is exploring investment in plantations and allied industries overseas. It has visited and evaluated possibilities in African countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana and Cameroon and South-East Asian countries such as Indonesia, Laos and Vietnam. The company which is expected to firm up its investment plans in 3-4 months is likely to make its maiden foray into rubber plantations before following up with tea.

Although the company has been exploring the possibility of setting up rubber plantations in North East Tripura, the process is on hold at the moment.

Cotton falls on decision to hold export cap

Rajkot, Feb. 11:

Cotton prices crashed on Friday after the Committee of Secretaries decided on Thursday not to raise export ceiling from the 55 lakh bales fixed for this season ending September.

Short supply in the physical market has pushed up cotton prices to a record during the week. Demand has slowed down but prices are not falling as arrivals are very limited.

At Rajkot, cotton Sankar-6 variety was traded at Rs 58,500-59,000 a candy of 356 kg against Rs 60,000 on Thursday. Raw cotton was traded at Rs 1,350-1,400 for 20 kg. During the week, raw cotton touched Rs 1,480-1,500 for 20 kg. About 40,000 bales of 170 kg arrives in Gujarat every day. Arrivals have dropped to 10,000 bales a day in a week.

Traders said exporters and domestic mills were buying strongly but when prices touched Rs 60,000, demand fell marginally.

On Friday, the benchmark ICE March cotton contract rose 2.9 per cent to an intra-day peak of \$1.9263 a pound. That was the highest in the 141-year history of the New York exchange and its predecessors, and also above the price reached during the height of the cotton embargo of the American Civil War in the 1860s.

Our Mumbai Correspondent reports: On Friday, the market was weak despite the ICE futures rising. Cotton traded easy across major spot markets in the country. Prices dropped Rs 2,000-2,500 a candy with most buyers keeping away after decision not to raise the cap on exports. In Maharashtra, Shankar-6 was quoted at Rs 58,000-59,000 a candy. All-India arrivals stood at around 1 lakh bales.

Other rates: LRA Rs 58,000 (Rs 59,000); H-4 Mech1 Rs 59,000 (Rs 59,000); Bunny Brahma Rs 61,000 (Rs 61,500); MCU - 5 / Surabhi Rs 63,000 (Rs 63,000); DCH - 32 Rs 85,000 (Rs 87,000).

Spot rubber prices improve

Kottayam, Feb. 11:

The physical rubber prices improved on Friday. Major grades recovered in tune with the gains on the NMCE catalysed by another better closing in Bangkok. According to sources, the market was comparatively calm but the session ended in a positive note probably expecting an even higher closing on Saturday.

Concern over holiday

The long weekend holidays in TOCOM have been yet another concern to keep the market firm, an analyst said.

According to traders, sheet rubber increased to Rs 236 (235) a kg mainly on covering purchases. The grade finished steady at Rs 236 a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi as per Rubber Board.

Futures recover

The February series recovered to Rs 234.20 (232.13), March to Rs 239.49 (236.76), April to Rs 248.25 (245.50) and May to Rs 251.74 (248.72) a kg for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

The volumes totalled 10170 lots and open interest 14054 lots. The turnover was Rs 244.52 crores.

RSS 3 (spot) surged ahead to Rs 286.94 (280.48) a kg at Bangkok. The Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) remained closed on account of National Foundation Day.

Spot rates

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 236 (235); RSS-5: 226 (225); ungraded: 221 (220); ISNR 20: 232 (231) and latex 60 per cent: 149 (149).

Offerings at tea auctions in North fall

Kolkata, Feb. 11:

This week (Sale 6), the number of offerings (packages) at the three North Indian tea auction centres at Kolkata, Guwahati and Siliguri was 358,928 as compared with 384,393 in the corresponding sale of last year, according to J Thomas & Company Pvt Ltd, the tea auctioneers.

Of this, the share of Kolkata was 156,244 (161,793) comprising 141,226 (149,240) of CTC/Dust, 13,311 (10,687) of Orthodox and 1,707 (1,866) of Darjeeling.

The corresponding offerings at Guwahati were 122,746 (158,939) and at Siliguri 79,938 (63,661). Selected clean, well made and liquoring Assam CTCs were irregular around last.

The remainder were easier in line with quality. Few better Dooars were around last while the remainder were irregularly lower.

There was fair support from Tata Global and Hindustan Unilever. Western India operated actively on better liquoring teas. Some export enquiries were received for bolder broken and grainier fannings.

Local dealers and other internal operated on cleaner grainier varieties.

Nominal weight of clean and well made Orthodox teas on offer sold readily at firm to dearer rates. The remainder were irregular and lower with quality. Stalky varieties were discounted. West Asia shippers were active. There was good enquiry from Hindustan Unilever and North India.

Pesticide makers want NIOH report on endosulfan withdrawn

Say no evidence of any harmful effect on human beings

Ahmedabad, Feb. 11:

The Pesticides Manufacturers and Formulators Association of India (PMFAI) today demanded withdrawal of what it called the “erroneous” report of the Ahmedabad-based National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) on the endosulfan issue, saying imported substitutes to this insecticide would only lead to exploitation of Indian farmers.

The NIOH report, it said, had become an alibi for some environmental NGOs and business lobbies to raise the anti-endosulfan propaganda, which even China and other countries have opposed. It also claimed that there was nothing to suggest that endosulfan was harmful to human health in any way.

Kasargod case

The six committees set up by the Union Government have also concluded that endosulfan was not an issue in the alleged ill-health of the people in Padre village in Kasargod district of Kerala where the farmers had been using it.

Claiming that their problems were due to some genetic disorders, Mr Pradip Dave, President, PMFAI, told a press conference here that the basic issue involved was to protect the business interests of European chemicals manufacturers under the garb of environmental and health issues, at the cost of Indian farmers.

Mr S. Ganesan, Chairman, International Treaties Experts' Committee, said that these European chemical giants had decided to phase out endosulfan in 2001 as it was no longer profitable to

them. Chemicals (including pesticides and insecticides), he said, were the second largest traded commodity in the world, after fuel.

This business was worth \$1,447 billion a year, with European Union's share being 60 per cent in 2009, according to WTO estimates. A ban on endosulfan would only benefit them.

Mr R. Hariharan, a representative of the International Stewardship Centre, said India was the world's largest manufacturer of endosulfan, a low-priced broad spectrum generic "contact" insecticide soft on pollinators. India has a 70 per cent market share of endosulfan business globally with exports worth Rs 180 crore annually.

Gujarat alone produces 55 per cent of world's requirements of 40 million litres, worth Rs 1,350 crore, whose imported alternatives will cost Rs 4,500 crore to the Indian farmers.

Dr Jyotsana Kapadia, a scientist who petitioned NIOH for three years under the RTI campaign to ferret out 1,800 pages of raw data, said the July 2001 report in an Indian magazine about the alleged health issues of Kerala farmers using endosulfan had led to the "unscientific" NIOH report, which was now being cited on various global forums by vested business interests seeking a ban on endosulfan.

Mr Nayan Visavalya, a farmer from Amreli district of Gujarat, who was also present, said even prolonged use of endosulfan had caused no health problems to anybody

'Dry' alert for rubber plants in South as westerly engulfs North

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb. 11:

The latest Agro-Met advisory issued by India Meteorological Department (IMD) for five days ending Monday has warned that rubber plants in Kerala are likely to experience drought-like conditions.

Farmers have been advised to stop tapping of rubber and undertake soil moisture conservation measures.

'ACTIVE' WESTERLY

Meanwhile, an evening weather update by IMD on Friday said that the fresh 'active' incoming western disturbance would affect the western Himalayan region for the next five days.

Later, the system would push linearly into the plains of northwest India in line with its eastward movement, and set up weather there from Sunday to Tuesday. It would enter the Gangetic plains on Tuesday and Wednesday.

A weather warning issued by the IMD said that isolated heavy rain or snowfall would occur over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh on Saturday and Sunday.

Short-term forecast valid until Sunday said that scattered rain or snowfall would occur over Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

RAINS FOR PLAINS

It will be isolated over Uttarakhand on Saturday and fairly widespread thereafter. Scattered rain or thundershowers has been forecast over Rajasthan, Delhi, Punjab and Haryana from Sunday onwards.

Minimum temperatures are expected to rise by 3 to 4 deg Celsius over northwest India, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra until Monday as moisture embedded in the western disturbance steams up.

Associated convection (rising motion of air) and formation of thunder clouds would cap night radiation from escaping into upper air, thus holding up the minimum temperatures.

Maximum temperatures are also expected to rise by 2 to 4 deg Celsius over the plains of northwest India and adjoining central India during this period.

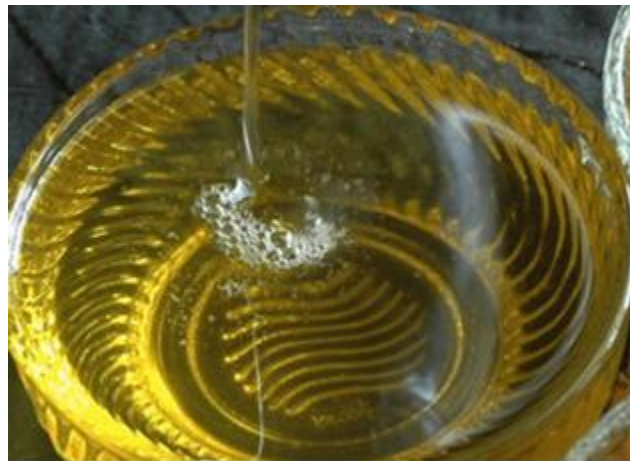
NEXT SYSTEM?

In line with the evolving pattern foreseen earlier last week, another 'active' westerly system could enter northwest India around February 20.

A European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts prediction sees this system instrumental in likely setting up some weather over east India, along the east coast and even the southern peninsula.

This is likely to unfold in conjunction with an easterly wave/low-pressure area in the Bay of Bengal washing ashore along the Sri Lankan coast and impacting the southern peninsula, the US National Centres for Environmental Prediction suggested.

Edible oils remain steady on thin buying



Mumbai, Feb. 11:

Edible oil prices in the Mumbai market ruled steady on Friday, on lack of demand and under resale selling pressure.

Soya refined and palmolein declined by Re 1 and Rs 2, on lack of demand, despite the higher closing of foreign markets. Resale selling pressure in these oils for due date kept volumes thin.

Groundnut oil, sunflower oil, rapeseed oil and cotton oil ruled steady. Indore NBOT soya oil futures witnessed a positive trend, on the back of a firm Malaysian market.

Market sources said that, on Friday, only around 50-60 tonnes of palmolein were resale traded, in the range of Rs 610-612, in the Mumbai market. Volume with direct refineries was almost zero, as they were quoting higher rates.

In Mumbai, Ruchi was quoting palmolein at Rs 616, soya refined oil at Rs 633-635, and sunflower refined oil at Rs 704. Malaysia's BMD CPO futures February-10 closed at MYR 3,988 (3,966), March-11 was at 3,970 (3,954) MYR. Indore NBOT soya oil futures February-11 was Rs 645.40 (Rs 646.50) and March-11 was Rs 668.30 (Rs 665.80).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rate (Rs/10 kg):

Groundnut oil 765 (765), soya refined oil 635 (636), sunflower expeller refined 680 (680), sunflower refined 720 (720), rapeseed refined oil 655 (655), rapeseed expeller refined 625 (625), cotton refined oil 625 (625) and palmolein was 608 (610).

Lack of fresh buying pounds pulses



Indore, Feb. 11:

Pulses continued to witness drab trading amidst sluggish demand. Decline in fresh buying interest by millers keen on releasing their stocks has affected demand for pulses.

With decline in trading at mill-level, trading in pulse seeds has declined, leading to sluggishness in pulses, said a trader, Mr Maoji Bhai, while talking to *Business Line*.

Notwithstanding steep rise in chana futures on the NCEDX whose February and March contracts closed at Rs 2,659 (up Rs 23) and Rs 2,754 (up Rs 28), respectively, chana prices in the spot gained marginally with its price at the closure of trading was quoted at Rs 2,560 a quintal after opening at Rs 2,540-Rs 2,550 a quintal in the morning.

However, despite marginal rise in chana, its dal continued to remain steady on slack demand. In the spot, chana dal (bold) quoted at Rs 3,225-Rs 3,250 a quintal, chana dal (medium) quoted at Rs 3,150-Rs 3,175 a quintal, while chana dal (average) quoted at Rs 3,025-Rs 3,050 a quintal.

Masoor and its dal remained steady. While masoor quoted at Rs 3,225-Rs 3,250 a quintal, masoor dal (bold) quoted at Rs 3,975-Rs 4,000. Masoor dal (medium) at Rs 3,875-Rs 3,900, while masoor dal (average) quoted at Rs 3,725-Rs 3,750. Moong, urad and tur also ruled firm on subdued demand. Moong quoted at Rs 4,800-Rs 5,000 a quintal.

Mixed trend in sugar



Mumbai, Feb. 11:

Sugar prices at the mill level bounced back on Friday.

In the spot market, prices for S grade declined by Rs 15, but M grade ruled steady due to fresh demand.

Naka rates were marginally down by Rs 5, but mill tender rates were quoting higher by Rs 10-15 for quality M grade.

A wholesale trader at the Vashi market said on Thursday evening that about 15-16 mills came forward with tender offer and sold 1.5-2 lakh bags (each of 100 kg) at Rs 2,640-2,670 a quintal for S grade and Rs 2,690-2,735 a quintal for M grade.

The North Indian market also rose by Rs 20-25 from the lower level, which helped create a positive sentiment in the Maharashtra market.

arrivals

Arrivals in the markets were about 45-46 truck loads (100 bags each), and local dispatches were about 46-48 truck loads. With the rising temperature in main consuming States of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, traders are expecting bulk buying to start shortly.

Spot sugar prices, after declining Rs 180-190 since the start of January 11, now seems to be settling down. Volume is still need-based at a nominal level, sources added.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association spot sugar rates: S-grade: Rs 2,781-2,830 (Rs 2,801-2,831) and M-grade: Rs 2,821-2,881 (Rs 2,826-2,886).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade: Rs 2,720-2,750 (Rs 2,725-2,750) and M-grade: was Rs 2,760-2,815 (Rs 2,760-2,810).

Rice loses steam on slack demand



Karnal, Feb. 11:

Sluggish domestic and overseas demand pulled down the prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice by Rs 50-150 a quintal on Friday.

Mr Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told *Business Line* that the sentiment is low as the market is volatile. The market witnessed a drop of around Rs 200 a quintal in aromatic and a fall of around Rs 100-150 a quintal in non-basmati varieties this week. Buyers are staying out of the market, and it's hard to anticipate the levels where the market can get any support, said Mr Chandna.

Price of Pusa-1121 varieties dropped by Rs 100-125 a quintal. Pusa-1121 steam ruled at Rs 5,300-5,400 a quintal against the levels of Rs 5,500 quoted two days back. Pusa-1121 sela quoted at Rs 4,250-4,400 and Pusa-1121 at Rs 5,200-5,250.

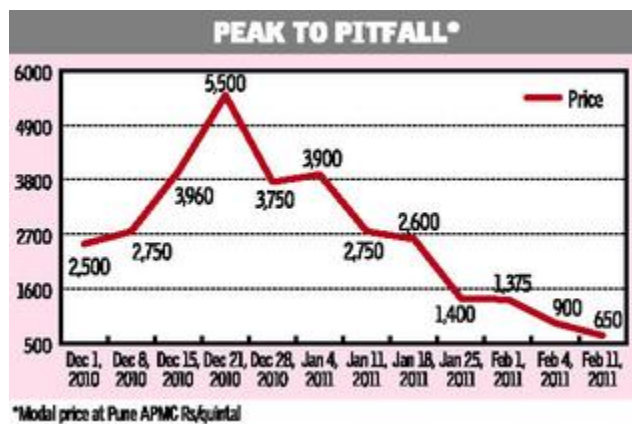
Basmati sela quoted at Rs 6,200-6,300 and basmati raw at Rs 7,300-7,400. Duplicate basmati ruled around Rs 4,000 a quintal.

The prices of brokens of 1121 variety were: Tibar was quoted at Rs 3,000-3,400, Dubar at Rs 2,200-2,500 and Mongra at Rs 1,800-2,000.

Sharbati sela sold at around Rs 2,700 and Sharbati steam around Rs 3,000-3,100 a quintal.

Around 1,000 bags of PR sold at Rs 1,000 a quintal. Around 1,400 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) quoted at Rs 2,000-2,030, around 2,000 bags of Pusa-1121 at Rs 2,000-2,400 and about 1,000 bags of pure basmati at Rs 2,200-2,600 a quintal.

Onion continues to slide despite low arrivals



Chennai, Feb. 11:

Onion prices continued to decline this week despite lower arrivals due to lack of buying.

Trading in Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, Asia's largest onion market, was affected as farmers protested against low price. Prices for poor quality onions crashed to Rs 200 a quintal on Wednesday.

Trading was affected on Wednesday and Thursday but recommenced on Friday.

Elsewhere in Maharashtra and Gujarat, normal trading took place. Some stability was seen returning to market on Friday as arrivals dropped sharply.

In Pimpalgaon, the modal price or the rates at which most trades took place increased to Rs 775 a quintal against Rs 721 on Thursday as arrivals dropped to 582.5 tonnes from 650 tonnes.

In Pune, however, the modal price dropped to Rs 650 a quintal from Rs 675 despite arrivals slipping to 1,146 tonnes (2,428 tonnes).

“Buyers seem to have completed their purchases as arrivals flooded markets last week.

Exports decision

Though arrivals were lower this week, no buying was seen,” said Mr Madan Prakash, Director of Rajathi Group that trades in onion.

Onion prices are seen stabilising around this level, though any decision to resume exports could help push them higher.

Following protests by farmers, a proposal has been sent to the Union Government to resume exports that have been banned since mid-December when prices touched Rs 6,500 a quintal at Lasalgaon.

Prices surged in December as the early kharif onion crop was damaged due to unseasonal rain in November. The crop arrival was also delayed.

With kharif onions flooding markets now instead of late December and early January, prices have nosedived, leading to protests by farmers.

Turmeric pales on poor offtake



Erode, Feb. 11:

Spot turmeric witnessed further decline on Friday at Erode, with prices falling Rs 700 a quintal. Buyers avoided picking up large quantities.

“We are not getting any fresh orders and for want of demand, the price of the turmeric is decreasing every day. On Friday alone the prices dipped Rs 700 a quintal. This has affected the farmers,” said Mr R.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

He said bulk buyers expect the prices to go down further. If the market improves, they will start buying heavily.

He said, “Except Nizamabad, sales in other centres had not begun, and even in Nizamabad prices were not so high. If the demand increases, sales and prices will increase. Usually from February 15, the sales go up leading to rise in prices. But this year, we expect the sales and prices to increase only by the last week of February.”

The farmers bringing new crop to the market expressed their dissatisfaction over the prevailing price and said if the same trend of Rs 8,000 a quintal and below continues, they will incur loss. We will make a profit only if prices touch Rs 10,000/quintal, they said.

In Erode Turmeric Merchants Sales Yard, finger variety fetched Rs 7,834-11,294 a quintal, root variety Rs 7,311-10,296 a quintal.

Salem crop-finger variety was sold at Rs 11,636-12,629 a quintal, root variety Rs 11,119-11,629 a quintal. Of the 2,978 bags that arrived in the market, 1,200 were sold.

In Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, old crop-finger variety was sold at Rs 9,309-11,789 a quintal, root variety at Rs 8,001-10,422 a quintal.

New crop-8 number variety-finger was sold at Rs 7,503-9,300 a quintal, root variety at Rs 5,001-8,367 a quintal. Totally 100 bags of turmeric arrived for sale, of this 71 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 9,129-11,729 a quintal, root variety at Rs 7,010-10,396 a quintal. All the 132 bags arrived were sold. Regulated Marketing Committee, finger variety fetched Rs 9,359-11,569 a quintal, root variety at Rs 9,269-11,204 a quintal. Out of the 658 bags that arrived, 319 bags sold.