THE HINDU

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Hearing on seafood exporters' plea adjourned

Special Correspondent

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The Kerala High Court on Friday adjourned to next week the hearing on a petition filed by the Seafood Exporters Association of India seeking a directive to India Gateway Terminal Private Ltd, operator of the International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT), Vallarpadom, to enforce the directive of the Cochin Port Trust (CPT) to issue bills of terminal handling charges (THC) directly to exporters and shippers as per the rates fixed by the Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP).

Justice P.R. Ramachandra Menon adjourned the hearing to enable the port trust and the terminal operator to get instructions on the petition.

The court had earlier directed the CPT to look into the grievances of the association that the charges collected from exporters were higher than the rates fixed by TAMP. The court had also ordered that if there was any substance in the grievances, the CPT should take remedial action.

The association said in its petition that at a meeting convened by the CPT on July 18 following the directive, the terminal operators had said that the charges were collected in accordance with TAMP rates.

The operators had told the meeting that the higher charges were billed by steamer agents. It was against this backdrop that the CPT issued a directive to the operators to issue bills of THCs directly to exporters and shippers.

The petition said that the operators had not taken any step to comply with the directive.

The practice of issuing bills through steamer agents still continued, charging exorbitant amounts. The association alleged that the operators refused to implement the CPT directive despite repeated reminders, because the operators were hand in glove with the steamer agents' association.

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Foodgrain merchants for developing Royapuram as third major terminal

Staff Reporter
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The Tamil Nadu Foodgrains Merchants' Association has urged the Indian Railways to develop Royapuram as the third major rail terminal of Chennai rather than Tambaram, where major development works were underway.

The association said that the railway was planning to terminate all south-bound trains at Tambaram and such a move would greatly affect passengers. Accompanied by the Dindigul Member of Parliament N.S.V Chitthan, an association delegation led by its president S.P. Jeyapragasam met the Railway Board Chairman, Vinay Mithal, at New Delhi recently and submitted a memorandum pressing various demands.

The association said that Roypuram, with its 72 acres of railway land, was ideal to be developed as the third terminal of Chennai. The association had joined hands with the Tamil Nadu Rail Passengers Right Tribune and held awareness campaigns at various southern districts on the difficulties of halting trains at Tambaram. Further, the association members have also met several State Ministers including the Finance Minister, O. Panneerselvam, to discuss the issue. It was also planning to meet Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.

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Talks with farmers on raising Veeranam tank level soon

Special Correspondent

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Officials of the Public Works Department will soon hold talks with farmers to ascertain the feasibility of raising water level in the Veeranam tank to tide over the tight supply situation in the Sethiathope dam, said Collector V. Amuthavalli.

During a farmers' grievance day session held here on Friday, representatives of the Sethiathope dam ayacutdars said there was acute shortage of water in the dam and if not attended to immediately, paddy cultivation in the region would be affected.

They suggested an increase in the Veeranam tank level, because a canal branching out from the bank was feeding the Sethiathope dam. Ms. Amuthavalli said the PWD Executive Engineer at Chidambaram would hold talks with them.

Certain farmers pointed out that owing to the delay caused by the Direct Procurement Centres in procurement of paddy, farmers had to stock the commodity openly in their farms, exposing it to adverse weather conditions.

When enquired about the reason for the delay, the DPCs said they did not have adequate funds to procure paddy.

Ms. Amuthavalli said steps would be taken through the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation to remedy the situation.

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Encroachments removed from vegetable market

Staff Reporter

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Vegetables and other paraphernalia confiscated during drive

At least two truck-loads of vegetables and other paraphernalia that were kept encroaching upon the public utility space in the Central Vegetable Market here were removed on Friday.

Following complaints of large-scale violations, including encroachment, the Corporation Commissioner, S. Natarajan, made a surprise inspection at the market in the early morning of Friday.

Among the complaints were illegal collection of rent for allowing putting up of shops on pavement, wholesale traders sub-letting shops on a daily rent basis, wholesale traders indulging in retail sales and illegally selling groceries and goods other than vegetables.

A statement said that retail traders who sold perishable goods were affected because of wholesale traders indulging in retail sales.

The Commissioner instructed the officials to ensure that no such unauthorised activity continued in the market.

The City Engineer, A. Madhuram, Assistant Commissioners, N. Arumugam Nainar and M. Murugesapandiyan, and Executive Engineer, Chandrasekaran, were among those who accompanied the Commissioner.

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Farmers demand better distribution of water

Special Correspondent

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Tractors and harvester machines not available for rent, they complain

A majority of farmers complained that water for irrigation was insufficient and demanded better distribution at the grievance redressal meeting held here on Friday.

Presiding over the meeting, District Revenue Officer B. Murugesh assured to convene a meeting, within a week, comprising farmers' representatives, water users' associations and officials from the Public Works Department among others. “Let us sort out the problem and ensure that fields in the tail-end areas get water,” he said.

The farmers said that the turn system of water distribution had to be continued so as to cover all the paddy fields. “We are half-way through and any change in the schedule now may lead to a crisis. Hence, the authorities should give attention in the release of water to all the farmers,” they said. When some farmers complained about non-availability of tractors and harvester machines rented out by the Agriculture Engineering Department, Mr. Murugesh asked for an explanation. An official from the department, however, maintained that in Madurai and Usilampatti they had tractors, harvester machines and bulldozers available for rent. Many farmers objected to the official's reply and continued to blame the department. “Every time we enquire the response was that the tractor was under repair or the harvester machine had been sent to some neighbouring district.” After heated arguments, the DRO suggested the official to send a proposal to the government seeking more equipment as per requirements.

When another official claimed that 96 per cent of works on the 58-village canal scheme at Usilampatti had been completed, again the farmers raised their voice in unison saying that it was nothing but a lie. “The project that was given a shape as early as 1982 to benefit 2,500 acres in the region had so far been revised four times owing to cost escalation,” many old farmers recalled and charged the indifferent attitude of the officials for the undue delay.

However, the officials maintained that the works would be over by year-end.

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Guidelines for promoting venture capital on poultry liberalised

R. Sairam

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NABARD to disburse back-ended capital subsidy upfront

The Central Government's Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries has liberalised the rules for promoting venture capital projects for poultry.

Instead of the earlier method of disbursing interest-free loans and interest subsidies, the revised rules would see back-ended capital subsidy being given upfront, which would help borrowers and also enthuse the banks.

The subsidies would be routed through National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). The Animal Husbandry Department, which comes under the Union Ministry of Agriculture, has revised the rules for the scheme, which was introduced during 2005-06.

The revised rules would be effective during the current fiscal.

R. Shankar Narayan, NABARD Assistant General Manager, told *The Hindu* here on Thursday that the scheme was intended to help unemployed youth and the small entrepreneurs. It would boost employment and production of poultry products, upgrade technology to improve productivity, help provide quality meat produced under hygienic conditions to consumers and facilitate rearing of birds such as quails.

Refinance option

Through the revised guidelines were issued only recently, it would also cover loans disbursed after April 1, 2011. Commercial banks could also avail refinance from NABARD for loans provided to the poultry sector in the current fiscal of 2011-12.

As no hard and fast eligibility criteria had been set for this scheme, unemployed youth would become private entrepreneurs to avail assistance under this scheme. They would be eligible for carrying out activities such as breeding farms for turkey, ducks, Japanese quails. However, commercial broiler and layer birds (egg-laying birds) rearing is not permitted.

The components of the scheme include central grower units (upto 16,000 layer chicks per batch), hybrid layer units (upto 5,000 birds per batch) and hybrid broiler units (upto 5,000 birds). Apart from these, feed mixing units and disease investigation laboratories were also covered, he said.

Assistance would also be provided for establishing related infrastructure such as open cages and refrigerator transport vehicles, retail outlets for dressing (packaging), marketing, and mobile marketing units, cold storage for poultry products and egg broiler carts. While some large processing units would be covered, they require separate sanctions.

Banks could also avail refinance of poultry loans under this scheme. This project has a back-ended capital subsidy component of 25 per cent of the total financial outlay of a project for general category beneficiaries and 33.33 per cent for Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes.

The bank loan should account for a minimum 40 per cent of the total outlay. The beneficiary would have to avail the bank loan initially, after which the bank would arrange for subsidy disbursement through NABARD.

Business Standard

Sugar prices remain flat

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 20, 2011, 15:11 IST

Sugar prices remained flat on the wholesale market here due to adequate stocks position against restricted demand.

Traders said ample stocks position against sparse local buying for the festival season mainly kept the prices at last levels.

Following were today's quotation per quintal.

Sugar ready M-30 2,950-3,060 and S-30 2,925-3,025
Mill delivery M-30 2,800-2,940 and S-30 2,790-2,920

Sugar mill gate prices (excluding duty): Kinonni 2,940, Asmoli 2,930, Mawana 2,875, Titabi 2,860, Thanabhavan 2,770, Budhana 2760 and Dorala 2,850

Edible oils turn weak on sluggish demand, global cues

Press Trust of India / New Delhi August 20, 2011, 15:07 IST

Edible oil prices declined on the wholesale market this week largely due to slackness in demand from millers and retailers amid weakening global trend. Castor oil in the non-edible section also showed some weakness owing to reduced offtake by industrial units and other consuming industries.

Palm oil fell in global markets, joining a slump in commodities, on deepening concerns that a slowing global economy may reduce demand for the tropical commodity used in food and fuel. Meanwhile, palm oil futures dropped 0.4% this week on the Malaysia Derivatives Exchange.

Mustard expeller oil (Dadri) shed Rs 20 to Rs 5,980, while sesame and cottonseed mill delivery (Haryana) oils declined by Rs 50 and Rs 30 to Rs 6,200 and Rs 5,520 per quintal respectively.

Taking cues from overseas markets, palmolein (rbd) and palmolein degum (Kandla) oils softened by Rs 25 each to Rs 5,850 and Rs 5,550 and crude palm oil (ex-kandla) traded lower by the same margin to Rs 5,200 per quintal respectively.

Soyabean refined mill delivery (Indore) and soyabean degum (Kandla) oils traded in negative zone with a loss of Rs 30 each to Rs 6,470 and Rs 5,920 per quintal respectively. In the non-edible section, castor oil dropped by Rs 50 to Rs 8,350-8,450 per quintal.

The wholesale market remained closed on Monday on account of the 'Independence Day'.

Grains: Prices of wheat dara and its products rose on the wholesale market during this week on increased offtake by flour mills to meet the ongoing festive season demand. However, basmati rice and bajra softened on sluggish demand against adequate stocks.

Traders said increased offtake by flour mills amid the ongoing festive season led to rise in wheat dara and its product prices. Wheat dara (for mills) rose by Rs 10 to Rs 1,175-1,180 per quintal, while atta chakki delivery traded higher by the same margin to Rs 1,185-1,190 per 90 kg.

Maida traded higher at Rs 750-780 from Rs 640-780 and sooji moved up by Rs 15 to Rs 830-845 per 50 kg on festive demand. In the rice section, basmati common and Pusa-1121 variety eased to Rs 5,200-5,300 and Rs 4,150-4,800 against last close of Rs 5,300-5,400 and Rs 4,150-4,800 per quintal respectively.

Bajra moved down to Rs 850-860 against last close of Rs 920-930 per quintal but maize strengthened on pick up in demand and shot up by Rs 40 to Rs 1,190-1,200 per quintal.

Pulses: Kabli gram and masoor rose on the wholesale market this week on pick up in demand, driven by ongoing festive season. In the national capital, kabli gram gained the most adding Rs 200 to Rs 5500-7900 per quintal on rising demand.

Masoor small and bold also moved up by Rs 20 each to Rs 2,670-2,970 and Rs 2,820-3,070, while its dal local and best quality traded higher by Rs 50 and Rs 20 to Rs 3,450-3,550 and Rs 3,620-3,920 per quintal respectively. On the other hand, lobia lacked necessary follow up and lost Rs 200 to Rs 4,700-5,200 per quintal.

Urad and its dal dhoya which remained steady during the major part of week, met with resistance at higher levels and declined by Rs 50 and Rs 150 to Rs 3,750-4,150 and Rs 4,900-5,000 per quintal respectively.

Arhar and its dal variety moved down by Rs 100 each to Rs 2,900-3,400 and Rs 4,300-4,400 and moth shed Rs 50 to Rs 2,100-2,500 per quintal respectively.

Sugar: Sugar prices fell marginally on the wholesale market this week following increased arrivals against restricted buying.

Sugar ready medium and second grade prices commenced on a steady note at Rs 2,950-3,075 and Rs 2,925-3,040 per quintal on some support. Subsequently, it met with resistance on increased arrivals and fell by Rs 15 to Rs 2,950-3,060 and Rs 2,925-3,040 per quintal.

Similarly, mill delivery medium and second grade prices commenced quiet at Rs 2,800-2,950 and Rs 2,790-2,930 dropped slightly to settle at Rs 2,800-2,940 and Rs 2,790-2,920, showing a loss of Rs 10 per quintal.

Among millgate excluding duty section, sugar kinnoni, titabi, dorala and budhana all eased by Rs 10 each to Rs 2940, Rs 2860, 2850 and Rs 2760 per quintal respectively.

Jaggery: Prices of gur dhayya dropped by Rs 100 per quintal on the wholesale market here this week due to ample supply. Other gur varieties ruled flat throughout the week on some support. In Delhi, gur dhayya prices fell from Rs 3,300-3,400 to settle to Rs 3,200-3,300 per quintal.

Meanwhile, gur chakku, pedi and shakkar prices maintained last week's closing levels of Rs 2,800-2,900, Rs 3,000-3,100 and Rs 3,200-3,300 per quintal. In Muzaffarnagar, gur chakku moved down from Rs 2,450-2,525 to conclude at Rs 2,425-2,500, showing a loss of Rs 25 per quintal.

However, gur raskat prices held steady at Rs 2,350-2,450 per quintal on sporadic beer making industries demand. At Muradnagar, gur pedi also ended without any changes at Rs 2,750-2,800 per quintal, while gur dhayya prices remain unquoted due to paucity of stocks.

Dry fruits: Select dry fruit prices declined on sluggish demand at prevailing higher levels against adequate stocks position this week. Lower advices from producing regions also dampened the trading sentiment, traders said.

Almond (California) declined by Rs 100 to Rs 10,800 per 40 kg, while its kernel shed Rs 3 to Rs 377-387 per kg. Copra fell by Rs 100 to Rs 7,700-7,900 per quintal and copra powder by Rs 200 to Rs 2,900-3,600 per 25 kg.

Pitsachio Irani, Hairati, Peshwari and Dodi were traded lower at Rs 680-730, Rs 950-1060, Rs 1,160-1,260 and Rs 500-580 against last close of Rs 700-750, Rs 1,000-1,110, Rs 1,210-1,310 and Rs 540-590 per kg respectively.

Kirana: Select spices rose on the wholesale market this week on buying by stockists and retailers to meet the ongoing festive season demand against restricted arrivals.

In the national capital, black pepper common, turmeric, jeera common and best quality were up by Rs 100 each to Rs 29,600-30,100, Rs 7900-12,100, Rs 15,600-15,900 and Rs 17,900-18,100 per quintal respectively.

Makhana shot up by Rs 30 to Rs 300-330 per kg on paucity of stocks, while cardamom small varieties such as chitridar, colour robin,bold and extra bold traded higher by Rs 5 each to Rs 565-595, Rs 595-625, Rs 585-635 and Rs 855-885 per kg respectively on festive demand.

However, watermelon kernel lacked necessary follow up support and shed Rs 5 to Rs 145 per kg.

Bullion: Gold prices rose to a new high of Rs 28,230 per 10 gram here this week on buying by stockists and investors, driven by a record rally in overseas markets. Silver also spurted by Rs 7,200 to Rs 66,300 per kg on industrial demand following a firm global trend.

Trading sentiment remained bullish after gold rose to a record above $1,880 an ounce in New York, on concern that the global economy is slowing. In addition, scattered local buying for the coming marriage season and fears of further hike in gold prices in coming days also boosted the trading sentiment.

In the national capital, gold of 99.9 and 99.5% purity recorded significant rise of Rs 2,130 and Rs 2,100 to a fresh peak levels of Rs 28,230 and Rs 28,080 per ten grams respectively. Sovereign followed suit and surged by Rs 1,400 to Rs 22,400 per piece of eight gram.

Silver ready and weekly-based delivery spurted by Rs 7,200 and Rs 8,135 to Rs 66,300 and Rs 8,135 per kg respectively. Silver coins also jumped up by Rs 7,500 to Rs 73,500 for buying and Rs 74,500 for selling of 100 pieces.

UP kharif arcreage likely to increase 6.6%

Virendra Singh Rawat / Lucknow August 20, 2011, 0:31 IST

Uttar Pradesh may witness a rise of 538,000 hectares in its kharif coverage during the curren season to be 8.6 million hectares compared to 8.12 million hectares last season, a growth of per cent.

Paddy, black gram, green gram, soybean and sesame have registered rises, while that of tur groundnut and maize has declined. Kharif sowing starts from June, while harvesting picks up from October.The target for kharif and paddy acreage was earlier set at 9.23 million hectares and 5.9 million hectares, respectively, while the corresponding production targets were set at about 17.5 million tonnes (mt) and 13.5 mt, respectively.

“The recent rainfall will help kharif crop production in UP. However, early rainfall this year has adversely affected the sugarcane crop, especially in western UP, where humid weather has resulted in pest infestation,” said Kisan Jagriti Manch president Sudhir Panwa.

However, the actual kharif sowing in UP is lower than the targets set for the 2011-12 season. During 2010-11, paddy production was 12 mt. During 2008-09 and 2009-10, the correspondir figures were about 13 mt and 10 mt, respectively. Paddy was sown on 5.63 million hectares l year, while the corresponding figure for 2008-09 and 2009-10 was six million hectares and fiv million hectares, respectively.

This year, the Centre had raised the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy by Rs 80 a quint The MSP for paddy (common variety) and (A grade) was Rs 1,000 a quintal and Rs 1,030 a quintal last year, which is now Rs 1,080 a quintal and Rs 1,110 a quintal, respectively.