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## Scientists say vital on GM crops: Minister

Staff Reporter

KOCHI: Union Minister of State for Agriculture K.V. Thomas has said the scientific community should give a final word on the ongoing debate on the use of genetically-modified (GM) crops in the country.

In his inaugural address at the State science fair held at the Government Boys Higher Secondary School in Aluva on Tuesday, Prof. Thomas said scientists should also give a final verdict on the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers in the country.

Pointing out that the differences of opinion on the advantages and disadvantages of genetically modified crops and chemical pesticides and fertilizers should not affect the prospects of farmers in the country, Prof. Thomas said the nation would be left out of the race, if it failed to adopt the latest advancements in the field of science and technology.

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## Methods to reduce intrusion of wild animals into farms discussed

Staff Reporter

*Trench will be dug to protect entire farms in Jallipatti: DFO*

Tirupur: The Forest Department officials held a liaison meeting with farmers from Jallipatti hamlet and areas near 9/6 check post on Udumalpet-Munnar stretch, on Tuesday, to discuss methods to reduce the frequent attack of wild animals on crops and livestock in the region.

### Meeting

The deliberation was organised after the farmers suffered significant financial losses owing to intrusion of elephants, panther and wild boars into their farms situated in the hamlets in Udumalpet revenue division bordering Anamalai reserve forests.

### Damages

While the elephants caused damages to mango being cultivated in the region, the panther killed a calf, a few country fowls and a dog.

The wild boars had been frequently eating out tuber crops and vegetables.

District Forest Officer K. Rajkumar assured the villagers that a 2.5-km-long trench would be dug to protect entire farms in Jallipatti bordering the reserved forest area.

### Cage

On the demands of farmers to set cage trap to catch the panther, Mr. Rajkumar said such possibility would be considered as the last option since it was ascertained that the attacks were made by a female panther having two cubs.

“Catching the panther will isolate it from her cubs, threatening the existence of the tiny ones. Instead, we will strengthen the patrolling in the areas vulnerable to panther attack to give protection to livestock,” Mr. Rajkumar added. Likewise, the farmers' demand to give them the powers to kill the wild boars was ruled out by the forest officials.

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### **Increase in vegetable prices eats into family budget**

K. Lakshmi

*“Escalating transportation cost, labour charges have contributed to price rise”*

Photo: K.Pichumani.



**RISING STEADILY:**Preparing monthly budgets has become a challenge for many consumers, due to the sharp hike in vegetable prices.

CHENNAI: The runaway increase in the prices of vegetables over the past few months has put constraints on household budgets.

With the cost of many staple vegetables continuing to soar, residents have begun cutting down on quantity of purchase. The cost of onions, which touched Rs.100 a kg last month, was sold at Rs.70 a kg in retail markets on Tuesday. The price that had dropped to Rs.40 a week ago, has shot up again as the supply to the Koyambedu market has decreased.

S.Chandran, a wholesale trader, said the Koyambedu market received only half the supply of onions from Maharashtra. “We are managing with the supply from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. It will take two months for the prices to stabilise,” he said.

Customers are forced to carefully prepare their budget in order to cope with the rising prices. B. Anuradha, a resident of Ayanavaram, said: “The prices of vegetables are shockingly high. Many vegetables such as beans, carrots and tomatoes are priced around Rs.50 a kg. I have to shell out Rs.150 to buy vegetables that we require for three days. That used to be my weekly budget for vegetables until a year ago.”

Some customers such as V.Sowmya of Vadapalani have started shopping for vegetables at the Koyambedu wholesale market instead of the neighbouring retail shop. "The vegetables being sold at Koyambedu are relatively cheap. Since the money spent on vegetables has gone up significantly I consciously cut down other expenses," she said.

"Steady increase"

Wholesale traders at Koyambedu said the cost of vegetables has witnessed a steady increase since last year. On Tuesday, drumsticks were sold at Rs.80 a kg in the wholesale market and Rs.100 a kg in retail shops.

The cost of tomatoes has also been high as rains in the neighbouring states had played spoilsport. One kg of tomatoes costs Rs.36 in the retail market. Even those vegetables such as beetroot and bitter gourd, which were priced below Rs.10 a kg early this year, cost Rs.30 a kg now.

Escalating transportation cost and labour charges also contributed to the skyrocketing price of vegetables. "Lorries transporting vegetable produce from Bangalore to Chennai used to charge Rs.6, 000 a year ago. Now, we are unable to get a vehicle even for Rs.10,000," Mr. Chandran said.

Many retailers also suffer from the impact of the price hike as the profit margin has become low. T. Palanichamy, a retail trader, said "I have removed price tags from my shop. Many customers now buy only quarter kg of vegetables. Even curry leaves are priced at Rs.50-60 a kg. Unlike earlier, I am unable to give them free of cost now."Potatoes and cabbage, priced at Rs.24 a kg and 20 a kg respectively, are some of the few vegetables available at relatively affordable rates.

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**'Encourage farmers to take up horticulture'**

Special Correspondent

*Training for panchayat presidents starts*

TIRUVARUR: A sum of Rs. 53.55 lakh have been spent for horticulture development in the district in the past four-and-a-half years said U.Mathivanan, Dairy Development Minister, here on Monday.

He was inaugurating a training for village panchayat presidents on horticulture cultivation.

The Minister said that under the Integrated Horticulture Development Scheme, a sum of Rs. 25.62 lakh has been spent; Rs.22.66 lakh has been spent under the National Bamboo Mission and under the Micro Irrigation Scheme a sum of Rs.27.48 lakh has been spent.

In total 3,595 persons have benefitted out of the schemes in the district and the government has also spent Rs. 8.6 lakh under the National Herbal Mission.

M.Chandrasekaran, Collector, said that panchayat presidents are the right persons to encourage farmers to take up horticulture cultivation.

Shankar, vice-chairman of Tiruvarur Municipality also participated.

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## **Wild elephants, a scourge for farmers**

Staff Reporter

Krishnagiri: Wild elephants rampaging crops has now become the scourge of farmers in Denkanikottai and its surrounding areas for the past one month.

A herd of elephants, numbering about 25, entered into Lingatheeranapalli village and around Denkanikottai and damaged vegetables like beans and tomatoes and banana plantations on Monday night.

Forest officials led by Conservator of Forests Mohamed Ikram Sha, District Forest Officer A.K. Ulaganathan and Assistant Conservator of Forests Rajendran reached the village and drove

away the herd to the nearby Sanamavu and Denkanikottai Reserve Forests at midnight. But their efforts came to nought as the herd returned in the morning and continued to damage the crops. The officials once again assembled at Denkanikottai to drive away the elephants on Tuesday, M. Ramachandran, Forest Ranger, Denkanikottai told The Hindu. Denkanikottai, Anchetti and other surrounding villages on the Karnataka border have been worst hit by the jumbos.

### Solar-powered fencing

In order to prevent further intrusion by the elephants, the farmers urged the forest officials and other authorities to maintain solar-powered fencing and put up moats around the forests.

Agitated over the frequent crop loss caused by elephants, farmers had blocked road last week near the check post in Denkanikottai and a village near Hosur on Royakottai Road.

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### Fish culture in check dams to bring income to tribals

Staff Reporter

*Profit through fish sale to go to village forest committees*

THENI: For the first time, large quantum of rainwater stored in various check dams constructed by the Forest Department on Varushanadu hills has been utilised effectively for enhancing livelihood activities of tribals living in remote and inaccessible villages on the hills.

The Forest Department with the help of Department of Fisheries has dumped large quantity of fish eggs in about 20 check dams on various points of the Varushanadu hills.

Eggs of three species of Indian Major Carps – Catla, Rohu (Labea Rohita) and Mrigal (Cirrhinus mrigala) – have been dumped in these check dams.

These fish varieties will fetch better price to growers as demand for them in domestic market is very high.

The District Forest Officer, V. Ganesan, said that the water in these dams would not dry for the next six months. Maintenance of the fish would be handed over to the respective village forest committees.

The committee members would monitor the growth of these varieties and protect them. They have the right to harvest the fully grown fish from these check dams and sell them in the market.

The profit earned through the fish sale would go to village forest committees only, he added.

To be emulated

“If the pilot project worked out well, we would emulate it in other hilly regions in the district. Expenditure for such income generation activities was less. Community participation was very essential for the success of the programme,” Mr. Ganesan pointed out.

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## **Australia floods likely to last weeks**

Alison Rourke

*Military helicopters supply food and medicine to the city of Rockhampton after floods hit Queensland, killing three people.*

- PHOTO: AP



**SWAMPED: The extent of flooding in Australia is unprecedented. Here an area of Rockhampton where debris, snakes and crocodiles pose a danger to residents.**

The last road into the Australian city of Rockhampton was cut off by water on January 2 as Queensland's premier, Anna Bligh, warned that the floods which have overwhelmed the state may not recede for weeks.

“It looks like Rockhampton's in the middle of an inland sea. The amount of water coming down these river systems is nothing short of astonishing,” said Bligh on a visit to the city. “Given the scale and size of this disaster, and the prospect that we will see water sitting potentially for a couple of weeks, we will have major issues to deal with throughout January.” Rockhampton, which has 75,000 people, will be supplied by military helicopters and by barge. Fourteen tonnes of food and medical supplies were taken in on January 2 by road before the highway was cut off.

Area, size of France, Germany

The flooding has hit an area the size of France and Germany, affecting 2,00,000 people in more than 20 towns and cities.

Police in Rockhampton have ordered residents to leave their homes as electricity is switched off in low-lying areas.



Up to 40 per cent of the town is expected to be affected when the river peaks. Seventy people have registered at the evacuation centre in the city, though there is space for many more.

A 60-year-old man was reported to have drowned on January 2 after his car was washed off a road, bringing the number who have died to three since the flooding began on Christmas Day. Two other men travelling in the same car, aged 19 and 40, survived the accident. Ten have died since the start of the wet season in Queensland a month ago.

The acting assistant police commissioner, Alistair Dawson, asked people not to drive through floodwaters. "I really want to urge people to be cautious around water," he said. "As soon as we can open roads, we will." While some areas are braced for the full force of the flood, others have begun the clean-up. Julia Gillard, the Prime Minister, has announced grants of up to A\$25,000 (£16,000) for small businesses affected by the crisis.

"The extent of flooding being experienced by Queensland is unprecedented, and requires a national and united response to provide as much support to communities as we can," she said.

Gillard paid tribute to the way people were coping with the crisis, and said the government would do all it could to help them recover. "We know there are far too many families who have had to leave not only their homes, but also their businesses. This targeted financial assistance will help them minimise their economic losses as they embark on the very difficult recovery period that lies ahead, and help businesses start trading as soon as possible," she said.

Gillard acknowledged that the clean-up bill would be in the order of hundreds of millions of dollars.

#### Coal industry affected

Queensland's massive coal industry has been devastated by the flooding. "We have three-quarters of our coal fields unable to operate and unable to supply markets," Bligh told ABC Television. "There is likely to be a significant long-term effect from that — and not only nationally." — © Guardian Newspapers Limited, 2011

## Prakasam ryots may have to forgo kharif crop

Staff Reporter

ONGOLE: Farmers in Prakasam district fed by river Krishna fear missing kharif crop altogether in the future in the wake of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II verdict allowing Karnataka to increase the height of Almatti.

With 4.29 lakh acres under Nagarjunasagar project and 72,170 acres under the Krishna Western Delta, farmers in the district now look to the Union Government to intervene and protect their interests.

The verdict proves detrimental also to the ongoing Pula Subbaiah Veligonda project planned based on diversion of 45 tmcft 'surplus' water to the district through two 18-km long tunnels from Srisailem reservoir.

"Presently, the kharif crop is delayed in the Krishna delta by about two to three months after construction of Almatti, resulting in cyclones taking away ready-to-harvest paddy in November. There will be no kharif crop for us in the future if Almatti height is increased to 524.56 metres by the upper riparian State," laments 65-year-old farmer Malampatti Satyanarayana of Swarna village coming under the Krishna Western Delta, while talking to The Hindu.

When H.D. Deve Gowda was the Prime Minister, the Committee of Chief Ministers had after consideration of facts and figures had restricted Almatti height to 519.6 metres. The tribunal II verdict has now reopened the closed issue, Adarsha Rythu (model farmer) in Karamchedu Yarlagadda Chowdhary (35) said.

The Centre should form a committee to protect the riparian rights of ryots in Andhra Pradesh suffering both at times of floods and droughts, pleaded yet another farmer Jagarlamudi Venkateswarulu coming under Santharavuru side channel.

Pro rata basis

Pressing for release of Krishna water to Andhra Pradesh on a pro rata basis right from June, Kamamuri canal distributory committee former Chairman Jagarlamudi Anil Babu (45) said the Krishna Western delta existed much before Almatti and entitled to first use of Krishna water.

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## New paddy seed kindles hope for farmers

Staff Reporter

*'Pratyasha' is the 21st variety developed by the Mankombu Rice Research Station*



**Lifesaver for Kuttanad: 'Pratyasha' variety of paddy seeds**

ALAPPUZHA: The troubled paddy fields of Kuttanad, where the inability of farmers to harvest crop before rain has repeatedly spelt crushing losses, are now bristling with hope after the introduction of a new short-duration seed variety.

Aptly named 'Pratyasha,' the new seed is from the stables of the Mankombu Rice Research Station (RRS), the 21st variety developed there to be precise.

Successor of 'Uma'

The RRS, which functions under the aegis of the Kerala Agricultural University, had earlier developed the highly popular 'Uma' variety, which was being used by over 80 per cent of farmers in Kuttanad, and by about 50 per cent across the State.

However, unpredictable climate changes forced the RRS to think of a variety that could ripen faster than 'Uma,' which takes 120 to 130 days to reach the harvesting stage.

The research on 'Pratyasha' actually began way back in 1994, but the variety got approval from Crop Standard authorities late last year, according RRS Director S. Leenakumari.

Short duration

'Pratyasha,' according to Ms. Leenakumari, is a short-duration variety that can be harvested after 100-105 days, which means the sight of crop being damaged by rain just before ripening will not be as frequent as it has been.

The rice yield, admits the developers, is slightly less than that of 'Uma,' with 'Pratyasha' offering five to 5.5 tonnes a hectare in place of Uma's six to 7.5 tonne a hectare capability.

At the same time, 'Pratyasha' promises better taste than 'Jyothi' and 'Uma' varieties and has much more nutritional value with a higher content of iron and zinc, says Ms. Leenakumari.

Moreover, farmers who could have only one round of cultivation in a year can go for both 'puncha' and the second round as well, courtesy the one-month duration difference between the existing varieties and 'Pratyasha.'

The RRS has developed 560 kg of the new variety, 500 kg of which has been distributed to farmers — portion of it during the last season and some portion during the present 'puncha' season. The remaining seeds have been given to seed farms for mass production.

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Published: January 4, 2011 18:31 IST | Updated: January 4, 2011 18:31 IST Kathalia (West Tripura), January 4, 2011

### **Unseasonal pineapple cultivation benefits farmers in Tripura**



The Hindu File photo shows two girls harvesting pineapple at a farm at Nalkata village in Tripura. Photo: Arunangsu Roy Chowdhury

Unseasonal cultivation of pineapple, made possible by horticulture scientists in Tripura, is providing more revenue to farmers in the State.

“We used ethyl sodium carbonate chemicals for bearing fruit in winter which is not its proper season and we have been successful,” Sujit Saha, a junior scientist of the Horticulture department, said.

The department carried out experiments on 30 hectare at a cost of Rs. 6 lakh and was successful, he said.

Labourer Firoz Mia in West Tripura cultivated pineapples on one hectare of fallow land encouraged by the Horticulture Department last year and now 5,000 pineapples have ripened in December which means an earning of about Rs. 1,50,000.

“Initially I was not interested in cultivation of pineapples, but the officers of the Horticulture Department gave me a lot of subsidies in buying seedlings and also provided technical assistance for using chemicals for untimely bearing of fruit. I have been hugely benefited,” Mr. Mia said.

Tripura is now a State with surplus production of horticulture crops like mango, jackfruit, papaya, banana and litchi.

A Horticulture and Soil Conservation Department source said the State has a demand of about 2,14,000 tonne for this kind of produce, but the actual production has gone to over five lakh tonne.

Generally two types of pineapple are grown in Tripura — Queen variety and Kelenga variety.

Of these the popular one is the Queen variety of which production was 40,000 tonnes this year, while the Kelenga variety produced an estimated at 66,406 tonne.

The increased production of pineapple-based food products are, therefore, finding markets outside the State.

Manager of Piyush Agro Tech, P. S. Chauhan said his company received orders from an Italian company for sending a consignment of 1,02,000 cans of sliced pineapples after its experts ascertained the packaging process.

“Tripura pineapples, especially of the queen variety are now regularly going abroad. Canned pineapple slices are being sent to European countries,” Dipen Chowdhury, the in-charge of the processing unit of Piyush Agro Tech said.

The North East Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC), the central agricultural marketing agency and the Tripura Small Industries Corporation have come forward with mini-fruit processing units.

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### **Obama signs bill to improve nation's food safety**



AP File Photo of U.S. President Barack Obama.

Foreshadowing the coming power struggles between the White House and a more Republican Congress, President Barack Obama has signed a \$1.4 billion overhaul of the nation's food safety system as some lawmakers complained that it's too expensive and threatened its funding.

The first major overhaul of the food safety system since the 1930s, the law emphasizes prevention to help stop deadly outbreaks of food borne illness before they occur, instead of reacting after consumers become ill.

It calls for increasing government inspections at food processing facilities and, for the first time, gives the Food and Drug Administration the power to order the recall of unsafe foods.

Mr. Obama made improving food safety a priority shortly after taking office in 2009. There have been several deadly outbreaks of E coli and salmonella poisoning in peanuts, eggs and produce in the past few years.

But some Republican lawmakers, sensitive to the public's concerns about high levels of government spending and debt, say the \$1.4 billion, five-year price tag is too much and needs more scrutiny.

"I think we'll look very carefully at the funding before we support \$1.4 billion," Rep Jack Kingston told The Associated Press in an interview. Kingston hopes to become chairman of the agriculture subcommittee of the House panel that helps set government spending.

Republicans who want to withhold funding would appear to have little chance of succeeding. The bill passed Congress with broad bipartisan support last year on a 73-25 vote in the Senate and by 215-144 in the House.

Major food companies backed the bill, recognizing that safe food is good for business. Recent outbreaks in spinach and other foods hurt those industries financially as consumers reacted to recalls or stopped buying those products.

Mr. Obama quietly signed the bill at the White House after returning earlier yesterday from a family vacation in Hawaii, a day before a more Republican and less White House-friendly Congress returns to session Wednesday.





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Email Author

Mumbai, January 04, 2011

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## Economy to grow at 8.4% over next 5 years: Crisil

Contrary to the government's projection of double-digit GDP growth over the next few years, rating agency Crisil has projected a growth rate of 8.4% as it sees supply constraints hindering ambitious growth projections.

While domestic demand, robust consumption and investment rates are likely to support 8.4% growth over the next five years, there are five supply side issues that need to be addressed, the rating agency said. If that is done, India can be on a sustained 10% growth trajectory.

"The five key issues that need to be addressed to unleash India's growth potential include the quantity and quality of physical infrastructure, skill shortages in its bulging population, faltering agriculture and consequent high food inflation, fiscal inflexibility to spend on health, education and physical infrastructure, and governance deficit," said Roopa Kudva, managing director and CEO, Crisil.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/646362.aspx>

## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Jan 5

Max    Min

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Thursday, Jan 6

Max    Min

29.6° | 24.1°

30° | 22°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Sunrise: 6:32






Humidity: 84%

Sunset: 17:55

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1011.0

#### Extended Forecast for a week

Friday Jan 7	Saturday Jan 8	Sunday Jan 9	Monday Jan 10	Tuesday Jan 11
				
27°   24° Rainy	28°   24° Rainy	28°   25° Rainy	28°   25° Rainy	29°   23° Cloudy

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## DECCAN Chronicle *On The Web*

Published on Deccan Chronicle (<http://www.deccanchronicle.com>)

### *Forests and freedom*

By Vandana Shiva

Jan 05 2011

2011 is the year of the forest. It is also Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary. Forests were central to Tagore's works and institution building as they have been for India's creative expressions through the centuries.

As Tagore wrote in *The Religion of the Forests*, the ideal of perfection preached by the forest dwellers of ancient India runs through the heart of our classical literature and still dominates our

mind. The forests are sources of water as the women of Chipko showed in the 1970s. They are the storehouse of biodiversity.

The biodiversity of the forest teaches us lessons of democracy, of leaving space for others while drawing sustenance from the common web of life. (In his essay Tapovan, Tagore writes: "Indian civilisation has been distinctive in locating its source of regeneration, material and intellectual, in the forest, not the city. India's best ideas have come where man was in communion with trees and rivers and lakes, away from the crowds. The peace of the forest has helped the intellectual evolution of man. The culture of the forest has fuelled culture of Indian society. The culture that has arisen from the forest has been influenced by the diverse processes of renewal of life, which are always at play in the forest, varying from species to species, from season to season, in sight and sound and smell. The unifying principle of life in diversity, of democratic pluralism, thus became the principle of Indian civilisation.")

It is this "unity in diversity" that is the basis of both ecological sustainability and democracy. Diversity without unity becomes the source of conflict and contest. Uniformity without diversity becomes the ground for external control. This is true of both nature and culture.

In Tagore's writings, the forest was not just the source of knowledge and freedom it was the source of beauty and joy, of art and aesthetics, of harmony and perfection. It symbolised the universe. In *The Religion of the Forest*, the poet says our attitude of mind "guides our attempts to establish relations with the universe either by conquest or by union, either through the cultivation of power or through that of sympathy".

The forest teaches us union and compassion. For Tagore, our relationship with the forest and nature is a relationship that allows us to experience our humanity. Humans and nature are not separate we are one.

"In our dreams, nature stands in her own right, proving that she has her great function, to impart the peace of the eternal to human emotions".

It is this permanence, this peace, this joy of living not by conquest and domination, but by co-existence and cooperation that is at the heart of a forest culture. The forest also teaches us "enoughness" as equity, enjoying the gifts of nature without exploitation and accumulation. In

Religion of the Forest, Tagore quotes from the ancient texts, written in the forest: "Ishavasyam idam sarvam yat kinch jagatyam jagat

Yena tyak tena bhunjitha

Ma gradha kasyasvit dhanam"

(Know all that moves in this moving world as enveloped by god, and find enjoyment through renunciation not through greed of possession)

No species in a forest appropriates the share of other species to nutrients, water, and the sun's energy. Every species sustains itself in mutual cooperation with others. This is Earth Democracy.

The end of consumerism and accumulation is the beginning of the joy of living. That is why the tribals of contemporary India from Kalinganagar to Niyamgiri and Bastar are resisting leaving their forest homes and abandoning their forest culture. The conflict between greed and compassion, conquest and cooperation, violence and harmony that Tagore wrote about continues today. And it is the forest which can show us the way beyond this conflict by reconnecting to nature and finding sources for own freedom. For the powerful it means freedom from greed. For the excluded it means freedom from want, from hunger and thirst, from dispossession and disposability.

Diversity is at the heart of the living systems of Gaia, including her forests. Tagore defined monocultures as the "exaggeration of sameness" and he wrote: "Life finds its truth and beauty not in exaggeration of sameness, but in harmony."

Harmony in diversity is the nature of the forest, whereas monotonous sameness is the nature of industrialism based on a mechanical worldview. This is what Tagore saw as the difference between the West and India.

"The civilisation of the West has in it the spirit of the machine which must move; and to that blind movement human lives are offered as fuel, keeping up the stream power" (The Spirit of Freedom).

Globalisation has spread the civilisation based on power and greed and the spirit of the machine worldwide. And the global spread of the "passion of profit-making and the drunkenness of power" is spreading fear of freedoms.

A civilisation based on power and greed is a civilisation based on fear and violence.

“The people who have sacrificed their souls to the passion of profit making and the drunkenness of power are constantly pursued by phantoms of panic and suspicion, and therefore they are ruthless. They are morally incapable of allowing freedom to others” (The Spirit of Freedom).

Greed and accumulation must lead to slavery.

Today the rule of money and greed dominates our society, economy and politics. The culture of conquest is invading into our tribal lands and forests through mining of iron-ore, bauxite and coal.

Every forest area has become a war zone. Every tribal is defined as a “Maoist” by a militarised corporate state appropriating the land and natural resources of the tribals. And every defender of the rights of the forest and forest dwellers is being treated as a criminal. This is the context of Dr Binayak Sen’s life sentence.

If India is to survive ecologically and politically, if India has to stay democratic, if Indian citizen is to be guaranteed, we need to give up the road of conquest and destruction and take the road of union and conservation, we need to cultivate peace and compassion instead of power and violence.

We need to turn, once again, to the forest as our perennial teachers of peace and freedom, of diversity and democracy.

\* Dr Vandana Shiva is the executive director of Navdanya Trust

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**Source URL:**

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/dc-comment/forests-and-freedom-356>

5 Jan, 2011, 01.38AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale,ET Bureau

## **Rose prices witness a rise, expected to go up further**

PUNE: Roses are now selling at thrice the price last year and the upcoming Valentine's Day is expected to see them costlier by a further 25%.

"A large number of 'mahurat' for marriages this year has been the demand driver since November," said Pune District Floriculture Association president Shivaji Bhegade. "But the production has halved due to incessant post-monsoon rainfall.

The average ruling price for roses is Rs 4-5 per stem over the last year's price of Rs 2-3 per stem," he added. Mr Bhegade had supplied 12,000 roses worth Rs 84,000 for the marriage of a niece of the Sahara group chairman Subrata Roy last November.

The floriculture industry went through its worst time from 2006 to 2008 when many units shut down. The Maharashtra government intervened to resurrect them by waiving off interest of Rs 25 crore in 2009. Rujul Agrotech director Pandit Shikare, who grows roses on five acres in Talegaon, is happy that he survived through the tough times.

"The last two months have been very good for flower growers . Rose prices in the European market are 30 cents, which is Rs 18 per stem. Those who survived the tough times are getting good returns this year," said Shikare, who supplies to Soex Flora, one of the biggest rose exporters in the country. Growers have high hopes on the upcoming Valentine's Day.

"We exported 42 lakh stems in 2009. Despite good global prices, traders did not pay much to the growers. This year, we have accepted export orders but without any rate commitment. We

expect to get at least 25% more for export-quality roses this year,” said Bhegade.

“Though the production during the last two months was low, the flush for Valentine’s Day is good. It is snowing in Europe now but we hope that the weather will be favourable by the time exports begin by January-end,” said Ramesh Patil, chief executive officer of the Kolhapur-based Shreevardhan Biotech.

The company exported 10 lakh stems last year. Maharashtra has set up a horticulture park at Talegaon off the Mumbai-Pune highway, which along with the Kolhapur and Sangli belt is the hub of the floriculture industry in west India. This region exports over 60 lakh stems a year — 40% to Japan and 60% to the European markets. India exported flowers worth Rs 294.46 crore in 2009-10 which was down 20% from the 08-09 exports of Rs 368.81 crore.

5 Jan, 2011, 01.31AM IST, PK Krishnakumar,ET Bureau

### **Cardamom futures now rally on lower Guatemalan crop**

KOCHI: Cardamom appears all set for another season of high prices with futures steadily showing an upward trend. The major reason for the bull run this time is the production shortfall in Guatemala, the largest cardamom producer.

In the last few weeks, futures have risen from Rs 1,000 per kg to over Rs 1,600 per kg now. While the January futures are at Rs 1,580 per kg, the February futures are ruling at around Rs 1615 per kg. “Weather woes in Guatemala may lead to a lower crop there, which has triggered the rise in futures prices here,” points out Kunal Shah, head of commodities research of Nirmal Bang, a leading broking company. Growing domestic demand too has aided the sentiment.

The Guatemalan production this year was initially estimated to be at around 20,000 tonne, marginally higher than the previous year. But now the indications are that the output will be

smaller further, says exporter Nityanandan of SPG Ramasamy Nadar & Sons. "The Indian cardamom is currently priced in the range of \$30 and \$35 per kg in the international market against \$25 per kg from Guatemala," he said.

Comparative high prices have dented the export demand for Indian cardamom now. But a lower crop in Guatemala could lead to a rise in Guatemalan prices, which could favour India through higher exports. Indian cardamom exports are down by 300 tonne for the period till November 2011. In the last cardamom season which lasted till June-July, spot prices had peaked to Rs 1,700 per kg while the futures inched closer to Rs 2,000 per kg. During the current season which began around August, the spot prices had shot up initially before settling at around Rs 1,000 per kg by November. The auction prices in Kerala are around Rs 1,430 per kg.

"The prices are showing a bullish trend. Traders are holding stock anticipating higher prices," says PC Punnoose, general manager of Kerala Cardamom Processing and Marketing Co-operative Society. Though arrivals have increased, local demand too has picked up with the onset of marriage season in north India. The forecast of Indian crop is 10,500 tonne, slightly better than previous year.

5 Jan, 2011, 01.24AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale,ET Bureau

### **Maharashtra may miss sugar output estimate**

PUNE: Maharashtra, the country's biggest sugar producer, may miss its sugar production estimate of 95 lakh tonne for 2010-11 by at least five lakh tonne due to a drop in sugar recovery and a likely decrease in cane production.

"The average sugar recovery in the state till January 3 is less by 0.30% as compared to the same period of the previous year," said an official in the state sugar commissionerate.

According to the official estimate, sugarcane has been planted on 10.22 lakh ha in Maharashtra



and 826 lakh tonne cane is expected to be available for crushing in 2010-11 while the average recovery is 11.5%. But industry and research institutes expect cane and sugar production to be much lower than the official estimate.

BB Thombre, chairman and managing director, Natural Sugar and Allied Industries, said, "Sugar recovery in Marathwada is less by 1% till now. Even if it improves here after, the final recovery for the 2010-11 crushing season will be less by 0.5% as compared to the previous year. The cane yield is also less by 10 tonne per hectare."

Dr Subhash Shinde, head, crop production division, Vasantdada Sugar Institute, said, "Flowering has begun in most varieties of cane in the state due to the post-monsoon rainfall. The growth of cane stops after flowering. If the cane is not harvested even after 1.5 months of flowering, then the yield and the sugar recovery suffer a reduction."

There is not much decline in sugar recovery in the Kolhapur-Sangli belt which accounts for 25% of the state's production.

However, the mills in the two districts are fearing a drop in recovery of at least 0.5% after February due to the flowering. "As the cane is matured at the same time, we may face recovery loss from March onwards," said the managing director of a co-operative sugar mill in Kolhapur.

The sugar production in India in 2010-11 is expected to be 24.5-25 million tonne (MT) while the carry forward stock is 5.4 MT. The country consumes about 22 MT. Thus there is an 8 MT excess sugar of which, 4 MT is to be stocked for next year's consumption. There are global supply worries due to a drought in Brazil, the world's largest sugar producer, and a record rainfall in Australia. Indian mills are desperate to take advantage of this situation.

# Business Standard

Wednesday, Jan 05, 2011

## 2010 a nightmare for tobacco farmers

Prashanth Chintala / Hyderabad January 5, 2011, 0:19 IST

Crop loss estimated at Rs 625 crore

For Andhra Pradesh tobacco farmers, 2010 was a tough year. Heavy rain in the last week of November and the first week of December damaged the crop extensively, resulting in a loss of around Rs 625 crore.



“According to our estimates, standing crop in 52,000 hectares out of the total 110,000 hectares has been either partially or fully damaged. This is the worst crop loss the state has witnessed in the last 30 years,” Tobacco Board Chairman G Kamalvardhan Rao told Business Standard.

According to Rao, the investment loss to the 41,000 farmers who cultivated tobacco in the state is estimated around Rs 250 crore. In addition, the loss on account of crop damage will be Rs 375 crore. Thus, the total loss comes to around Rs 625 crore.

“Our entire investment has gone down the drain,” Tobacco Board member and general secretary of the Tobacco Farmers Federation, G Sivaram Prasad, said, adding that the crop that would survive would be of low quality. He said the cyclonic storm led to excess nitrogen in the soil. Consequently, the quality of the output would decline. “We will incur further losses due to low-grade tobacco,” he added.

Andhra is a major producer of flue-cured virginia (FCV) tobacco, the main export variety, and accounts for 70 per cent unmanufactured exports. The state accounts for 70 per cent and the neighbouring Karnataka 29 per cent of the total FCV production in the country. The remaining one per cent is shared by Maharashtra and Orissa.

Rao said the value of FCV tobacco exports last year stood at Rs 4,040 crore. The crop size had been 207 million kg in Andhra and 107 million kg in Karnataka. Over 70 per cent of the FCV tobacco produced was exported. However, on account of damage to the crop, the export of FCV tobacco this year is expected to decline steeply. "We expect at least a 30 per cent decline in exports both in value and volume terms," Prasad said.

FCV tobacco cultivation is stated to be capital as well as labour-intensive. Cultivation of a hectare requires 680 man days. And, the investment per hectare is estimated to be between Rs 35,000 and Rs 50,000 depending upon the type of soil and other agro climatic conditions.

The Tobacco Board has announced a compensation of Rs 6,000 per hectare for fully damaged and Rs 4,000 a hectare for partially damaged crop. This apart, the board has decided to ask nationalised banks to waive interest on crop loans, reschedule loans for the next four years and sanction an additional loan of Rs 50,000 to each tobacco farmer whose crop was totally damaged and Rs 30,000 to those whose crop was partially damaged. Tobacco farmers are not happy with this. They are demanding a subsidy of Rs 1 lakh a hectare, besides treatment on a par with coffee growers.

"In 2007-08, the Centre extended financial assistance of about Rs 120 crore to coffee growers to replace the diseased plants. We want similar treatment from the Centre," Prasad said.

In this context, he pointed out that more than 1.5 million farmers and farm workers were engaged in tobacco cultivation in Andhra. Tobacco is cultivated on 125,000 hectares over nine districts in the state.

"Cultivation of tobacco, particularly the FCV variety, is far more remunerative than other cash crops. Hence, it is very difficult for us to substitute it with any other crop," he added.

## Raw cashew nut output may rise 11%

Mahesh Kulkarni / Bangalore January 5, 2011, 0:18 IST

India's raw cashew nut crop, delayed by over a month this year due to unseasonal rain in November in major growing areas of south India, is likely to be higher by 11 per cent to 700,000 tonnes compared to last year.

"Even though the flowering has been delayed by a month, we expect higher output, mainly due to low morning temperatures and clear sunny days in the growing areas. In addition, we have seen area expansion this year," said Venkatesh Hubballi, director, Directorate of Cashew and Cocoa Development (DCCD).



This year, the area under cashew nut has gone up to 920,000 hectares compared to 890,000 hectares in 2010, a growth rate of 3.3 per cent. DCCD has been adding around 20,000 hectares under cashew every year for the past three years.

Earlier, the directorate had estimated a drop of around 15 per cent in this year's production. However, the changed weather helped flowering and going by the current indications, the production would touch the 700,000-tonne mark, Hubballi said.

"If there is no rain in January, the fruit-setting will be good and nuts will mature with dry weather. A dry spell during flowering and fruit-setting will be good for production," he said.

Cashew nuts are generally harvested in India from February to May. In 2010, India's cashew production stood at 630,000 tonnes.

G Giridhar Prabhu, former vice-chairman, Cashew Export Promotion Council of India and an exporter from Mangalore, said the processing industry hoped the domestic production would be

better this year. "We are hoping that good moisture levels will result in higher yields this year. But, the exact crop assessment can be done only in February", he said.

Cashew is mainly grown in Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The directorate is making efforts to grow the crop in places like Chhattisgarh, northeastern states and Andaman and Nicobar Islands as well.

India imports more than half its raw cashew requirement due to poor productivity. The imports are mainly from Tanzania, Mozambique, Kenya, Ivory Coast and Vietnam. During the current year, Indian processors have seen a record rise in prices of imported raw nuts. The prices of imported nuts from Tanzania have gone up by 47.6 per cent to \$1,845 a tonne compared to \$1,250 a tonne in 2009-10.

Overall, the landed cost of imported cashewnuts has been Rs 75-82 a kg during the current financial year compared to Rs 55-65 a kg last year, a rise of 26 per cent, Prabhu says.

He said the cashew kernel market in the country was on a rise even after Diwali, which was unusual. Kernel prices have risen 18 per cent since then. The average price of the W320 variety of cashew kernel is Rs 470 a kg compared to Rs 300-320 a kg in May 2010. The trend for 2011 depended on the domestic crop size and the cost of imported prices as the new crop from West African countries would be available from mid-March, he added.

### **Ban on onion exports brings tears to dehydration industry**

**Vimukt Dave & Rutam Vora / Rajkot/ Ahmedabad January 5, 2011, 0:15 IST**



The blanket ban on onion exports has affected the Rs 500-crore onion dehydration industry in India. Nearly 7,500 tonnes of dehydrated onion is stranded in ports.

The Ministry of Commerce & Industry had issued a notification on December 22, 2010 banning exports of all types of onions, following an alarming rise in prices in the domestic market. Soon after, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) followed suit suspending export of even dehydrated and processed onions. In its notification DGFT said, onions of all varieties – including Bangalore rose onions and Krishnapuram onions fresh or chilled, frozen, provisionally prepared or dried – barring cut, sliced, and broken onions in powder form, have been put under the prohibited category and not permitted to be exported.

An official from National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (Nafed) told Business Standard that dehydrated onion exporters belonged to the same category that prohibits export of onion. “Many dehydrated onion exporters approached us to get clarity on the export ban. They come under the HS Code 0703 10 10 and 0712 20 00; hence the restriction on exports applies to them as well.”

“It is meaningless to ban dehydrated products of onion as it has no role in the price rise. Hardly 20 per cent of the total onion output is getting converted to dehydrated products. We will take up the issue with the government to remove the ban,” said Kiritbhai Mehta, president, All India Dehydration Association.

Dehydration units fear heavy losses if exports are not allowed. “During March and April, fresh stock of dehydrated products will reach the market, which will bring down the prices of the old stock by 15 to 20 per cent. At present, we have to shell out an additional Re 1 per kg to store our products at the warehouses. This will add to the burden of exporters like us,” said Mehta. High onion prices have forced some of the dehydration units to shut down.

Globally, India holds about 50 per cent market share in the dehydration business. Recently China, one of the biggest competitors of Indian products, increased prices of its dehydrated products from \$2,400-3,000 (Rs 1.07 lakh to Rs 1.30 lakh approximately) per tonne to capitalise on India’s ban on dehydrated products.

“The dehydration business is earning foreign exchange for India and the government should recognise this. The export restriction will benefit our competitors like China and Egypt. Moreover, it will also damage our image in the international market as we fail to fulfill our commitments due to the government ban,” said Vitthalbhai Koradiya, managing director of Mahuva-based Maharaja Dehydration Private Limited near Bhavnagar.

“Approximately 7,500 tonnes of dehydrated products are ready in the ports but due to the ban we are not being able to ship it,” he added. India has about 95 active onion dehydration units, of which 70 are located in Gujarat, including Bhavnagar, Mahuva, Vadodara and Gondal. The country has about 30 export oriented units (EOUs) of dehydrated onion products. Major export destinations include Europe, Russia, France and America, where annually around 60,000 tonnes of dehydrated onion products are shipped.

### **US reviews anti-dumping rules on seafood**

**George Joseph / Kochi January 5, 2011, 0:14 IST**

The US Department of Commerce is proposing to amend the way it measures dumping of foreign goods, something of great interest to Indian seafood exporters, besides those of other countries.

On December 28, the DoC invited comments on the calculation of the weighted average dumping margin and the anti-dumping duty assessment rate.



“Several WTO (World Trade Organisation) dispute settlement reports have found that the United States’ application of these methodologies was inconsistent with our WTO obligations. In response, the department proposes modification of its methodologies,” says the DoC notification.

Indian seafood exporters believe the present way of calculation is unduly restrictive of exports. Others who export seafood to the US include Taiwan, China, Vietnam, Brazil and Ecuador.

Leading exporters here are pleased at the move and believe it likely that the US anti-dumping duty may be reduced or abolished.

The prevailing rate is a problem for Indian seafood exports.

“We are hopeful on the latest move of Washington. Although a final decision is expected after three-four months, it is likely that the duty might be reduced to a minimum rate,” said Anwar Hashim, president, Seafood Exporters Association of India.

### **Sown area in Gujarat increases 15%**

**Vimukt Dave / Rajkot January 05, 2011, 0:12 IST**

Good monsoon encourages farmers to sow more wheat, oilseeds.

As compared to last year, the total sowing area in Gujarat has increased by about 15 per cent. The area under wheat, chana, rapeseed, oilseeds, onion, garlic and potato has increased.

A good monsoon and more availability of water seem to have encouraged farmers to sow more. According to the state agriculture department, the area covered till December 27 was 2.76 million hectares, as against 2.4 m ha last year at the same time.

The department said sowing of wheat has reached 1.12 m ha, higher by 257,000 ha compared to last year's 868,000 ha. Wheat sowing has increased in Junagadh, Jamnagar, Rajkot, Amreli, Bhavnagar and Surendranagar districts of the Saurashtra region.

“Good monsoon and good availability of water for the crop increased the sowing of wheat. Favorable weather will translate into good production,” said B R Shah, director, agriculture.

Sowing of chana has increased to 192,000 ha from 151,000 ha, higher by 41,600 ha. Sowing of rapeseed has reached 214,000 ha, compared to last year's 200,000 ha.

On the other hands sowing of jeera has come down, as farmers diverted to crops like wheat and pulses. Compared to last year's 239,000 ha, the area under jeera as come down by 10,200 ha. Sowing of onion and garlic has increased. Onion sowing has increased from 35,500 ha to 49,700 ha. Garlic sowing has reached 25,800 ha, an increase from last year's 16,100 ha.



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Back Agri-scientists hard to come by

*MANPOWER CRUNCH.*



K.V. Kurmanath

Hyderabad, Jan. 4

The agriculture sector in the country is facing an acute shortage of graduates and scientists in the field, impacting both research and development and business prospects of public and private organisations.

In the absence of adequate manpower, companies are making huge offers to those who retired from Government service. Companies, which are coming with placement offers at university campuses, are offering entry-level salaries in the range of Rs 2.40 lakh to Rs 5 lakh.

According to the Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), the per capita agricultural scientist was the lowest in India with just 157 scientists for every 10 lakh population as against 545 in China and 4,099 in the US. ICAR itself is facing shortage of quality scientists.

Dr C.D. Mayee, Chairman of Agriculture Scientists Recruitment Board (ASRB), which recruits scientists for all Indian Council of Agriculture Research (ICAR), says both quality and quantity are concerns.

Citing an example, he said only 4,000 candidates could pass the first level test out of 22,000 candidates who appeared for the exam to select 290 candidates.

The shortage is so severe that private companies have begun to train botany graduates. A foundation run by the promoters of Vibha Seeds has started a plant breeders course for botany graduates. "We are going to set up a plant breeders academy," Mr P. Vidyasagar, Managing Director of Vibha Seeds, said.

Mr M. Prabhakara Rao, Managing Director of Nuziveedu Seeds, felt that increase in seats by hundreds would not help.

"Even if we produce 2,000 graduates from each university, the agricultural sector still would need people. Agri-business industry cannot continue with this problem longer," he said.

The Association of Biotech-Led Enterprises (ABLE) said the sector is facing manpower shortage in technical, technological and scientific segments.

Faculty needed

“Most colleges and universities offering education in biotechnology really do not have useful faculty to teach. The quality of PhD is also dismal,” Dr Shanthu Shantharam, Executive Director of ABLE-AG, said.

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**Back AP to seek Central assistance for relief to farmers, weavers**

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*Good news*

*The Chief Minister said that so far Rs 1,019 crore has been released as input subsidy and efforts are under way to cover all farmers by January 14.*

*Along with farmers' issues, the Chief Minister will also seek Central Government support to weavers who are in distress.*

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Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Jan. 4

The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr N.Kiran Kumar Reddy, today said that he will seek the Centre's help for a special relief package for farmers and weavers in the State.

The Chief Minister, who is visiting New Delhi on Wednesday, held a detailed review meeting with the State Finance Minister, Mr Anam Ramnarayan Reddy; the Revenue Minister, Mr N.Raghuveera Reddy; the Chief Secretary, Mr S.V.Prasad, and officials of the agriculture and finance departments, for a follow up action.

In a statement from the Chief Minister's Office, Mr Kiran Reddy said, “we have done what best we can for the farmers. But I feel that this is not enough. We want to do more to help the

farmers to overcome the situation. I will take up the issue with the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the Union Agriculture Minister, Mr Sharad Pawar and other Central leaders for liberal relief.”

During the interaction, the Government plans to request the Prime Minister to treat the Rs 400 crore already sanctioned as special grant and release more funds. “I hope the Centre will understand the peculiar situation AP farmers are today faced with,” he said.

#### Crop insurance

He said that the State Government has adopted a multi-pronged strategy to help the farmers through compensation, fresh crop loans, and waiver of interest on loans already availed, input subsidies and facilitating purchase of discoloured and damaged paddy and other crops. In addition, there is effort to cover all through crop insurance and also inclusion of tenant farmers.

The Chief Minister said that so far Rs 1,019 crore has been released as input subsidy and efforts are under way to cover all farmers by January 14 that is by Sankranti. The procurement of discoloured and damaged paddy is in full swing. The Food Corporation of India has also stepped up its procurement activity.

Along with farmers' issues, the Chief Minister will also seek Central Government support to weavers who are in distress. While Rs 312 crore has been provided in the budget for loan waiver for weavers, additional funds are being sought to address their other problems.

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**Back Coconut oil tops Rs 90/kg on corporate buying**



C.J. Punnathara

Kochi, Jan. 4

Coconut oil prices continue to break new records as it touched Rs 88.50 a kg in Kerala markets. Surprisingly, coconut oil was quoting at Rs 90 a kg in Tamil Nadu markets as corporate buying has become evident, even as arrivals continued to dwindle. Arrivals are expected to pick up only after the major coconut production season commences in mid-February, said Mr Prakash B. Rao, Director of Cochin Oil Merchants Association (COMA).

Corporate demand has surfaced as large companies that manufacture coconut oil-based shampoo, hair oil and other cosmetic products have begun stocking to meet their demand that is expected to emerge at the end of the winter season in North India. Production and transportations will have to be arranged for products, the demand for which will start couple of months down the line, sources in the trade said.

Copra sky-rockets

Floods and unseasonal rains have limited coconut production in neighbouring countries and India is currently exporting coconuts to countries such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan, Mr Rao pointed out. This has accentuated the crisis in the country during the lean production season.

As availability continues to dwindle, copra prices have surged to Rs 64.50 a kg, the level at which coconut oil prices were reigning, couple of month ago. And NAFED is the only source of copra for the Kerala market. The price spurt in competing edible oils has also contributed to the rise in coconut oil prices. Palm oil prices have risen to Rs 65 and palm kernel prices are currently quoting at Rs 85 a kg. Palm oil and palm kernel oil prices are not likely to weaken immediately as the crop reports predict a fall in Malaysian production. There is some expectation on the part of traders that coconut oil prices could rise further following other competing edible oil prices. Given the widening margin between coconut oil and palm oil prices, there is greater likelihood of adulteration, sources in the trade warned.

Oil mills and coconut oil producers will be sorely tempted to adulterate coconut oil with palm oil as the margins have now touched Rs 25 a kg.

The temptation becomes all the more as Kerala, the biggest retail consumer of coconut oil, produces less than what it consumes. In order to protect Kerala's coconut farmers, ships carrying palm oil and palm kernel oil are not permitted to berth at its ports. These ships are permitted to berth at neighbouring ports of Mangalore, Tuticorin and Chennai from where there is large-scale transport of palm oil and palm kernel oil to Kerala these days, sources said.

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**Back Trickling inflows boost pulses**



Our Correspondent

Indore, Jan. 4

Increasing demand from retailers and millers and weak arrivals pushed up prices of pulses by Rs 50-200 in the last few days. With the onset of the New Year, the demand for pulses has increased ahead of the Makar Sankranti and the ensuing marriage season commencing from January 14, but comparatively, weak arrival has perked up pulses which in the last week of December had been witnessing a downtrend because of sluggish demand.

Though Indore mandis were closed on Tuesday because of the 'Amavasya', in private trading, pulses ruled high on negligible arrival. Tur dal gained Rs 100 with the prices of tur dal (marka) quoted at Rs 5,900 a quintal, tur dal (full) quoted at Rs 5,700, tur dal (sawa No.) quoted at Rs 4,300-4,800, tur dal (Indore) quoted at Rs 5,550, while tur dal (Latur) and tur dal (Akola) quoted at Rs 5,400 and Rs 5,500 a quintal, respectively.

Urad dal also gained Rs 100 on improved demand and weak arrival. In the physical market, urad dal in the last three days perked up by Rs 200 primarily because of decline in arrival and spurt in demand. On Tuesday, urad dal (chilka) in the spot quoted at Rs 4,600-5,200 a quintal, while urad mongar quoted at Rs 5,800-6,600 a quintal.

Moong also ruled high on decline in arrival of the best quality moong. In the spot, moong mongar quoted at Rs 5,800-7,600 a quintal, moong dal (chilka) was quoted at Rs 4,800-5,450 a quintal. Similarly, massor gained Rs 50 on weak arrival and improved demand at mill level. In the spot, masoor dal (medium) was quoted at Rs 3,825, while masoor dal (bold) was quoted at Rs 4,025 a quintal, respectively.

On the other hand, chana dal ruled steady with the prices of chana dal (bold) quoted at Rs 3,050 a quintal, chana dal (medium) was quoted at Rs 2,950, and chana dal (average) was quoted at Rs 2,850 a quintal, respectively. Weak arrival also perked up pulse seeds barring chana which on Tuesday quoted Rs 10 lower at Rs 2,370 a quintal. Urad gained Rs 100 at Rs 4,200-4,300 a quintal, while masoor, moong and tur gained Rs 50 each. Masoor was quoted at Rs 3,250, moong, Rs 4,500-4,600, while tur (Maharashtra) was quoted at Rs 3,575 a quintal, respectively.

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**Back Solvent extractors rue hike in oilmeal freight rate**

Our Bureau

Chennai, Jan. 4

A move by the Railways to hike freight rates for oilmeals has left the solvent extraction industry worried.

In a circular dated December 20, 2010, the Railways had changed the classification for de-oiled cakes (oilmeals) from Class 110 to Class 120. This, according to the Solvent Extractors Association, will lead to a rise in freight charges between 11 and 13.5 per cent.

In a memorandum to the Union Railway Minister, Ms Mamata Banerjee, the association's President, Mr Sushil Goenka, said that oilmeals are produced locally and exports were made on wafer-thin margins.

“This increase in freight will make production of oilmeals unviable, thereby forcing many a processing plant to cut down production,” he said.

uses

Oilmeals are used in the manufacture of compound feeds for cattle, poultry and aquaculture. Meals derived from castor are used as fertilisers.

constraints

“A substantial increase in freight charge will also put constraint on the viability of dairy and food industry,” Mr Goenka said.

The hike in freight rate will result in increase in feed costs, in turn leading to hike in prices of milk, eggs, meat and fish.

High prices

“Prices of milk, eggs, fish and meat are already ruling high and are a cause for serious concern to the Government as inflation is now over 14 per cent,” he said.

Stating that oilmeals faced stiff competition in the global market from the US and South America, Mr Goenka said the hike will affect exports.

Incentive

“In fact, to compete in the international market, the Government has granted two per cent incentive under Focus Product Scheme for exports of some oilmeals and 5 per cent under VKGUY for castormeals. The hike in freight charges will nullify the benefits derived by exporters from the schemes, he said in his plea to review the decision.

Exports



Oilmeal exports from the country increased to 23.81 lakh tonnes during April-November of the current fiscal from 18.90 lakh tonnes in the same period a year ago.

Soyameal exports made up 17.1 lakh tonnes of this against 11.61 lakh tonnes during the year-ago period.

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**Back Coonoor tea sale turnover falls 7.08% in 2010**

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Jan. 4

The turnover at the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association in calendar 2010 had fallen 7.08 per cent compared to 2009, reveals an analysis of the Market Reports.

The turnover which, for the first time in 2010 had fallen below 2009 by July end, continued to remain low the rest of the year. In January end, the turnover had risen by 36 per cent over last year. By February end, the increase reduced to 18 per cent.

By March end, the increase rose to 24 per cent but fell to 19 per cent by April end, 7 per cent by May end and 1.39 per cent by June end. By July end, the turnover was lower by 3.18 per cent compared to 2009.

By August end, it had fallen 6.22 per cent below the previous year, by September end 9.18 per cent, by October end 8.75, by November end 8.02 per cent and by December end 7.08 per cent.

Higher volume

This has happened despite selling a higher volume because of the steep fall in the price fetched. In all, 51 auctions had been conducted in 2010. Totally, 5 crore kg had been sold against 4.36 crore kg in 2009, but every kg fetched Rs 14 less to average Rs 61.11.

Drop in turnover

Consequently, the turnover dropped to Rs 305.55 crore from Rs 328.83 crore last year, posting a decline of Rs 23.28 crore or 7.08 per cent.

In the case of orthodox teas which are mostly exported, both volume and price posted a decline.

The volume sold dropped to 2.97 million kg from 3.08 million kg. But, even this low volume could be sold only when price was reduced by Rs 15 a kg to average Rs 73.85.

In the case of CTC teas which are mostly consumed within the country, more volume was sold at lower prices. The volume sold increased to 4.70 crore kg from 4.05 crore kg. But the average price dropped by Rs 14 per kg to Rs 60.30.

**Date:05/01/2011 URL:**

**<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010552801800.htm>**

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**Back Medium, low-grade tobacco valued at Karnataka sale**

Anil Urs

Hubli, Jan. 4

Medium and low grade tobacco prices at the Karnataka auctions have increased by Rs 5-10.

A senior Tobacco Board official said: "Tobacco prices of medium and low grades have improved in the last fortnight. Also, we are seeing increasing demand for Karnataka's FCV tobacco from exporters.

Plenty left

"As we have marketed little over 50 million kg so far, there is plenty of tobacco left with the growers. We hope to close the year on a high note," he added.

At the end of the 79th day of auction (January 3), about 51.04 million kg (4.95 lakh bales) of FCV tobacco variety have been marketed in Karnataka, with an average price fetched Rs 93.76/kg.

## Grades

Of the total quantity marketed, bright grades comprised of eight million kg and were traded at an average price of Rs 117.15/kg. Medium grades comprised of 27 million kg, were traded at an average price of Rs 101.88/kg. Low grades, comprised of 15 million kg, were traded at an average price of Rs 66.63/kg.

## Auction Platforms

Following are platform-wise auction details, as on January 3: HD Kote 52,436 bales marketed (5.24 million kg) average price Rs 92.70/kg; Hunsur-I 28,644 bales (2.92 million kg) Rs 96.02/kg; Hunsur-II 42,325 bales (4.41 million kg) Rs 94.17/kg; Periyapatna-I 57,920 bales (5.93 million kg) Rs 95.21/kg; Periyapatna-II 53,002 bales (5.52 million kg) Rs 96.47/kg; Periyapatna-III 46,753 bales (4.87 million kg) Rs 92.94/kg; Ramanathpura-I 51,493 bales (5.45 million kg) Rs 92.19/kg; Kampalapura-I 44,649 bales (4.50 million kg) Rs 93.87/kg;

Kampalapura-II 39,301 bales (3.98 million kg) Rs 93.74/kg; Ramanathpura-II 46,388 bales (4.87 million kg) Rs 90.35/kg; and Hunsur-III 32,469 bales (3.30 million kg) Rs Rs 94.35/kg.

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**<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010552051900.htm>**

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**[Back](#) Special margin on Jan, Feb contracts hits pepper futures**

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Jan 4

Pepper futures fell sharply on liquidation by small and medium players following introduction of 4 per cent additional (special) margin from buyers of January-February.

“Long-position holders liquidated. Investors were buying exchange-delivered pepper at a rupee below January delivery price,” market sources told Business Line.

Processors were selling. Investors were thus buying spot and selling futures, which also aided the fall in futures contracts.

## Wrong signals

The additional margin was introduced to arrest the march of bulls. But pushing the market by Rs 500 a quintal today and pulling it down by Rs 500 tomorrow sends out wrong signals to the world market.

It would be construed as an unstable market, market sources said.

Buyers withdrew despite domestic demand as the market fell. Validity of only 158 tonnes of pepper will expire on February 5.

January contract on the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange dropped by Rs 498 to close at Rs 22,905 a quintal. February and March contracts fell by Rs 489 and Rs 446 to close at Rs 23,158 and Rs 23,382 a quintal.

## Turnover slips

Turn over dropped by 1,623 tonnes to 13,982 tonnes. Open interest dropped by 224 tonnes to 13,518 tonnes indicating liquidation.

January open interest dropped by 495 tonnes to 9,333 tonnes showing switching over and liquidation.

February moved up by 272 tonnes to 3,433 tonnes and March declined by 9 tonnes.

## Spot prices down

Spot prices fell by Rs 300 on low demand and selling pressure to close at Rs 21,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 22,000 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$5,275-5,300 a tonne (c & f) and remained out-priced, export sources said.

Overseas markets are yet to become active after the holidays.

## Overseas reports

An overseas report on Tuesday said Vietnam was still on new year holiday but the market for faq was reportedly steady at VND93,000-95,000.

In Brazil, the market looked steady with farmers holding stocks uninterested in selling.

In Indonesia, farmers almost sold out their crop while dealers were holding some stocks.

Some Indonesian sellers feel “market should increase shortly and, therefore, farmers are tending to hold back offers at the moment”.

Another report from the US said markets were not very active yet as the most competitive sellers from Indonesia were not offering at the moment while new year holidays in Brazil are still on.

Prices quoted for black pepper of different origins in \$/tonne c & f for New York were: MG1 asta – 5,550-5,650; Malabar faq 500g/l – 5,225-5,250 f.o.b.

White pepper quoted in dollar/tonne c & f for Muntok was 7,625-7,650.

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**Back Kochi port software system change hits seafood exporters**

V.Sajeev Kumar

Kochi, Jan. 4

Seafood exporters from Kochi port are facing innumerable difficulties, following the upgradation of the Customs EDI software from version 1 to 1.5. The technical snag that originated in August 2010 has stalled the disbursement of export incentives to exporters not only to Kochi, but across the country.

The officials in the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) pointed out that export benefits worth Rs 100 crore have been blocked on account of this .

The shipping bills filed by the exporters/Custom House Agents and Export General Manifest (EGM) filed by the shipping lines with the Customs Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), have to be uploaded in the DGFT site automatically, and the export incentives are processed by DGFT based on these transferred data.

The export incentives granted under schemes such as Duty Entitlement Pass Book scheme, Vishesh Krishi Gram Udyog Yojana and Export Promotion Capital Goods scheme, are not fully functional. Over 3,000 such shipping bills are pending with DGFT offices all over the country, the officials said.

**Worst affected**

The Kochi port is one of the worst affected due to the system upgradation. The other major ports such as Chennai, JNPT and Mumbai have not been adversely affected as the Customs EDI version has not been converted to the new system.

In spite of the various representations by the Exim trade bodies to the higher authorities at the Ministry of Finance, Commerce and to the System Directorate of Customs at New Delhi, no effective steps have been taken to rectify the problems. Mr Anwar Hashim, National President, SEAI, said that the association had a meeting with DGFT during the sectoral review and raised this issue. The Director-General had assured that everything would be sorted out soon, he said.

From 2005, the DGFT had made it mandatory that all shipping bills involving incentives are filed online and as a result many claims are pending. Even though re-transmission facility was introduced by the Customs, the bills are still not available at the DGFT.

Sources in the trade circles of Kochi port said the System Directorate of Customs had gone ahead with the system up-gradation by awarding the contract to a reputed corporate company, without properly testing the pilot version or with second line of action for rectifying the problems if they are likely to arise.

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**<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010551251700.htm>**

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**[Back](#) Wheat arrivals drop on cold weather**



Our Correspondent

Karnal, Jan. 4

The wheat market witnessed a mixed trend as the prices of Dara variety rose marginally, and the Desi wheat variety witnessed a steady trend on Tuesday

The dara variety ruled between Rs 1,240-1,250 a quintal. The price at retail outlets ruled at around Rs 1,255-1,265 a quintal, and for fine the quality it was around Rs 1,270 a quintal.

Mr Sewa Ram, a wheat trader, told Business Line that weather is getting colder and arrivals may drop further leading to a price rise in Dara variety. Around 220 quintals of Dara variety were offloaded at the flour mills in Karnal on Tuesday.

In restricted activity, prices of Desi wheat ruled firm. Prices of the Bhojan King was quoted at Rs 2,400 a quintal, Aaj Tak at Rs 2,300 and Nokia at Rs 2,350.

Despite an uptrend in wheat, flour prices ruled flat. Flour prices were quoted at Rs 1,260 for a 90kg bag. Similarly, Chokar prices ruled steady and was quoted at Rs 600 for a 49-kg bag.

Weather effect

The cold weather is boosting the expectations of higher wheat production as the weather conditions are favourable for wheat crop and it would help in raising the crop's yield, said wheat experts.

Haryana and Punjab are the main wheat producers where this year wheat has been sown on an area of 24.65 lakh hectares and 35 lakh hectares, according to reports.

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[Back](#) Range-bound trading in sugar market



Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Jan. 4

Spot sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market witnessed mixed trend with Rs 5-7 range-bound movement on Tuesday. At the mills level, due to absence of fresh demand, tender rates declined by Rs 10-20 a quintal. Naka delivery rates came down by the same margin. Half of the APMC market complex was closed afternoon as the volume was very thin. Arrivals and dispatches were at usual level.

A wholesaler said: "Absence of local retail demand and selling pressure for January 5 due date by stockists/traders weighed on the sentiment. Arrivals in the market were 48-50 truckloads (each 100 bags) and dispatch was about 42-45 truckloads. As mills are reluctant to sell at current price level on expectation of higher price, most of their tender offers are not getting the expected response, building up pressure on them. "



At the Vashi market, resale Naka delivery volume took place in the range of Rs 2,930-2,960 for S-grade and Rs 2,965-3,000 for M-grade.

According to Bombay Sugar Merchants' Association, spot sugar rates were S – grade: Rs 2,961-3,010 (Rs 2,960-3,005) and M – grade: Rs 2,998-3,061 (Rs 3,001-3,051). Naka delivery rates were: S – grade: Rs 2,930-2,960 (Rs 2,930-2,960) and M – grade was Rs 2,970-3,000 (Rs 2,970-3,000).

**Date:05/01/2011 URL:**

**<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010551291700.htm>**

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**Back Poor offtake pulls groundnut oil down**



Our Correspondent

Rajkot, Jan. 4 After a sharp gain due to speculative buying during past few days, groundnut oil declined by Rs 20 for 10 kg in Gujarat as demand dropped on high price.

At Rajkot, groundnut oil was traded on Rs 760-765 for 10 kg which was Rs 780-785 on Tuesday.

Groundnut quoted Rs 765-770 in Jamnagar and Gondal.

Groundnut oil for 15-kg new tin declined Rs 10 to Rs 1,320-1,325 from Monday's Rs 1,330-1,335 a tin.

The price got 15-litre tin was Rs 10 lower, touching Rs 1,215-1,220 in Saurashtra. In Mumbai, groundnut oil continued to rule stable in the absence of market moving factors. Groundnut oil held steady at Rs 780 for 10 kg.

According to retailers, due to higher price the buying has come down in the last two days. Buyers are waiting for further fall in prices.

Last week, prices continually went up as some brands bought the oil heavily. It resulted in groundnut oil price rising over Rs 55 for 15-kg tin.

A Rajkot-based miller said: "Today brands are keeping away from the market; that's why the market has come down. This trend will continue in this week as demand in the retail market declined due to high prices. Moreover, weaker international market forced prices to drop in domestic market."

**Date:**05/01/2011 **URL:**

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010551271700.htm>

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[Back](#) **Weak global cues drag edible oils**



Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Jan. 4

Most of the edible oils declined sharply by Rs 5-8 on Tuesday on profit-booking by speculators, resale selling pressure and weak global future markets. Lack of fresh local demand kept the volume low.

Bursa Malaysian Derivatives crude palm oil futures closed lower by 20, 23 ringgits (MYR) a tonne. In the Mumbai market, soya refined oil declined by Rs 5, palmolein by Rs 8, cotton refined oil by Rs 5, sunflower oil by Rs 5 a 10-kg.

Soya oil futures, which were under selling pressure, showed downturn. In Gujarat, with the increase in arrivals groundnut oil price at the main producing centre Rajkot - Saurashtra came down by Rs 25 to Rs 1,205 (Rs 1,230) a tin and Rs 780 (Rs 785) for a 10-kg loose.

Crude palm oil January contracts closed at MYR 3,847 (3,867) and February at MYR 3,850 (3,873). Indore NBOT soya oil January contracts closed at Rs 632.10 (Rs 635.40) and February at Rs 642.60 (Rs 648.80).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rate (Rs/10 kg): Groundnut oil 780 (780), soya refined oil 615 (620), sunflower exp. ref. 660 (665), sunflower ref. 720 (720), rapeseed ref. oil 643 (645), rapeseed expeller ref. 613 (615), cotton ref. oil 595 (600) and palmolein was 587 (595).

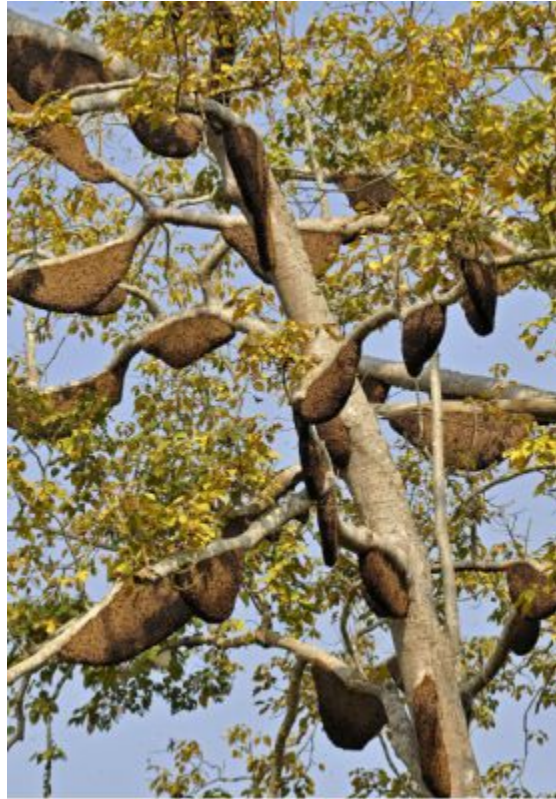
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**[Back](#) Assam bee tree**

— Ritu Raj Konwar



Giant honeybee colonies: A rare sight of colonies of giant honeybees (*Apis dorsata*) seen on a tree in Bahatpur village in Kulsi Reserve Forest in Kamrup district of Assam. There are nearly 100 giant honeybee colonies in this single tree, that have peacefully lived one more year under the protection of the local people of the area. Since such large colonies of giant honeybees are very rarely seen in a single tree, no one disturbs and collects honey from these bee colonies and local people have learnt to live with and respect them. There is a general concern that the total number of giant honeybee nests all over Asia are on the verge of declining due to shrinking forest areas, the use of toxic pesticides in farm lands, and bee hunting. Time to time, these giant honeybee colonies do migrate from Assam to the foothills of the Himalayas during the season when there is not ample supply of nectar and honey.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010552771800.htm>

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[Back](#) **Swirls of fig**

— P.V. Sivakumar



Energy provider: A member of the famous “Makhdoomia Bee Keepers” of Srinagar shows a fresh string of the season's naturally dried fig rolls at the Industrial Exhibition in Hyderabad on Tuesday. With a shelf life of two years, the Fig (*Ficus Carica*) or “anjeer” rolls are made from flattening the pear-shaped fruit. Priced at Rs 300-350 a kg, the seedless fig variety is a component of sugarless energy drinks.

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2011/01/05/stories/2011010552721800.htm>

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Back Sheet rubber hits Rs 210/kg on supply shortage

Aravindan

Kottayam, Jan. 4

Spot rubber prices recorded another high on Tuesday. Sharp gains on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM) futures and a positive mood on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE) catalysed domestic sentiments, while sellers stayed away expecting better rates in the days ahead. The market continued to experience an acute shortage of the raw material as growers still preferred to hold a major portion of their stocks. Though the change in weather was favourable for tapping, there has been no improvement in arrivals.

Sheet rubber increased to Rs 210 (208) a kg on fresh buying and short covering. The grade moved up to Rs 209.50 (207.50) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board.

Futures firm

The January series closed at Rs 212.68 (211.71), February at Rs 219 (218.73), March at Rs 223.70 (223.59) and April at Rs 230.37 (229.63) a kg for RSS 4 on the NMCE. RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs 226.39 (224.07) a kg at Bangkok. Its January futures flared up to ₹416.2 (Rs 227.90) from ₹405.1 a kg during the day session and then to ₹418 (Rs 228.85) in the night session on the TOCOM. Spot rates were (Rs/kg); RSS-4: 210 (208); RSS-5: 201 (200); ungraded: 197 (196); ISNR 20: 207 (205) and latex 60 per cent 142 (140).



### **Green veggies join high-price race**

January 05, 2011 10:44:15 AM

Abhimanyu Dutt/Pritisha Borthakur/Sohail Khan | New Delhi

While prices of onion, tomato, garlic and ginger are yet to see a decline, prices of green vegetables like okra, cauliflower, beans and carrot, have shot up. While okra is selling at Rs 80/kg at Safal vends and at about Rs 100/kg at other retailers, the bulbous roots still bring tears with another round of price rise on Tuesday.

While onion prices at Safal outlets went up by Rs 1 on Tuesday selling at Rs 48/kg and above Rs 65/kg in retail markets, the prices of okra, cauliflower, beans and other greens too are burning holes in the pockets of buyers. Cauliflower is being sold at Rs 15-20/kg and that too are not of good quality, peas are selling at the Safal outlets at Rs 27/kg and with the local retailers above Rs 30/kg.

Gajar ka halwa is costlier since carrots are selling at Rs 18 per kg at the Mother Dairy vends and in the open market it is priced more than Rs 20/kg. Last seasons (Dec 2009-Jan 2010) carrots was a single-digit vegetable. The only single-digit priced vegetable available in the Capital today is raddish which is selling Rs 7/kg at the Safal outlets and Rs 9-10 at local markets.

The prices of other vegetables like spinach are not too less and are burning holes in the pocket of households. It has once again forced common men to rethink about their monthly budget. "I cannot see any decrease in prices of vegetables; more or less it is the same. The price of onions has not gone down against the claims of the Government, on the other hand, prices of other green veggies are now going up." said Vinod Kumar, supervisor at Safal store Punjabi Bagh Central Market.

Tomato and Onion Merchant Association general secretary Rajendra Sharma said the prices would remain firm till Lohri or mid-January. "Supply from Rajasthan has almost dried up. Arrivals from Maharashtra and Gujarat would pick up after January 14. Green vegetables from the neighbouring areas will too arrive soon. Prices do not only depend on the produce, but it involves various factors including transportation which is also facing a lot of hurdles nowadays," Sharma said.

Onions imported by the State-run trading firms which cost around Rs 30/kg are likely to start arriving in the country by the end of this week.

Contrary to the claims made by the Government, Delhiites will now have to shell out extra for buying green vegetables. Families are now forced to rethink their daily menus as even after high claims by the Government to come up with reduced prices at Safal outlets the Capital again saw a slight increase in vegetable prices. On Saturday, the prices of onions and tomatoes were Rs 47 and Rs 31/kg. However, the prices increased again to Rs 48 and Rs 33/kg respectively at the outlets in the South Delhi area and it sold exorbitantly with the local vendors. The quality of vegetables, too, seem worse than ever before. "There's already so much of price hike, it's better to buy vegetables from outside, these days it's hard to get fresh vegetables at any Safal outlets," says Priyanka Kumari.

Many consumers, left with no option, have lessened their purchases of vegetables in order to make both ends meet amid the spiralling inflation. "The condition has deteriorated a lot. The way the prices of vegetables are going up, there is no vegetable available for less than Rs 40-50/kg," says Ram Singh, who runs a tea stall in the Gautam Nagar area. The relatively affordable tomatoes, onions and ginger-garlic-basic ingredients in most Indian meals are moving away from the common man's reach as prices continue to soar.

The prices have risen to such an extent that some harried families even find meat a cheaper option. Nita, a homemaker in Hauz Khas, says, "Our budget has gone haywire. We have to compromise on so many things. We have to decrease the quantity of vegetables consumed and the varieties that we would buy earlier." "The daily variation of prices in the veggies has become a disturbing element for the household budget," says Rupa, a customer at the Vasundhara Enclave Safal outlet.

### **CNG, PNG rub salt into consumers' wounds**

January 05, 2011 10:44:15 AM

The increase in the prices of CNG and the cooking gas (PNG) in the national Capital has evoked bitter reaction from the people. The consumers, who are already suffering from the spiraling prices of the essential commodities including onion, vegetables and milk, say the hike



in the gas prices will affect their budget. The public transport operators too said that repeated increase in the prices of gas has been putting a burden on them. Notably, the CNG price increased by Rs 1.25/kg in Delhi, Rs 1.50/kg in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad.

The new consumer price of CNG is Rs 29/kg in Delhi and Rs 32.50/kg in Noida, Greater Noida and Ghaziabad that came into effect from January 2.

Similarly, the new consumer price of PNG in Delhi has been revised from Rs 16.85 per scm to Rs 18.95 per scm up to consumption of 90 scm in four months. Beyond consumption of 90 scm in the four months, the applicable rate in Delhi would be Rs 26 per scm.

“The rising prices have been burning a hole in our pockets. Everything in the kitchen is slowly becoming unaffordable. Every few months, the cooking gas is becoming costlier,” said Sarla Khurana, a housewife. Vijay Nagpal, who owns a CNG-propelled car, said the main objective to switch on to CNG from petrol is getting defeated.

“With price of CNG increasing at this pace, it will soon be as costly as petrol and diesel,” he said. On the other hand, the Indraprastha Gas Limited said the increase in CNG retail prices will marginally impact the per kilometre running cost for the vehicles. For autos, the increase would be just 3 paisa per km, for car and taxi it would be 6 paisa per km and in the case of buses, the increase would be 35 paisa per km, which translates to less than one paisa per passenger per km.