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FARMER'S NOTEBOOK

Three new types of innovative sickles promise better delivery

M.J. PRABU

The farmer is unable to get financial support to popularise these devices

PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT



Simple but effective: The sickles are multi-purpose and need not be sharpened often.

Hand tools are particularly important for small farmers and laborers who cannot afford mechanized implements.

“Even a small improvement in these hand tools can lead to large-scale improvement in productivity or in working conditions across the country. However, de-centralised production and small scale of operations do not allow these hand tools to undergo notable changes over the years,” says Prof Anil Gupta, Vice Chairman, National Innovation Foundation (NIF), Ahmedabad.

Take the example of the simple sickle that is being used by thousands of farmers across the country for cutting grass, weeding etc. Though a simple tool, its usefulness and efficiency make it an important tool in every farmer’s household.

Regular sharpening

“But the blade needs to be sharpened at least once every two days. Farmers usually grind the blade against a sharp surface or take it to the ironsmith to sharpen it. This becomes a routine in the villages,” says Prof Gupta.

But Mr. Kishorebhai Bharadwa from Junagadh thought differently. He developed three different types of sickles that need not be sharpened regularly, and can be used for weeding, inter culturing, and harvesting.

“These address the problem of wearing out of blades in sickles due to repeated sharpening, as the shearing blades usually become blunt after cutting grass for a period of between eight to ten hours,” says Mr. Kishorebhai.

“In a normal sickle one needs to sharpen the whole blade at regular intervals. Repetitive sharpening makes the base thin and redundant. To avoid this, I developed three different types of sickles,” he explains.

Thin blade

The first type of the improved sickle incorporates two C-shaped, metallic guard plates — a thin blade sandwiched between and fastened in position through screws near the wooden handle.

The thin blade can be removed and sharpened and then fixed back to the iron base. The user need not go to the workshop for sharpening it. The second is dual type. The two sickles face opposite directions and are joined together at the base near the wooden handle.

Mr. Kishorebhai notes that this sickle can cut tough grass, silage or hay. It is fashioned in such a way by using the right grade of steel to retain its sharpness. If the blade on one side gets blunt, the other side can be flipped and used.

Concave shape

He shaped the third type like a concave shaped edge and attached a small pointed metal piece attached between the sickle and the handle to break soil clods.

“These sickles are multi-purpose and can perform different functions like harvesting, interculturing, and weeding. They offer easy handling and maintenance to the farmer and labourer,” says Mr. Kishorebhai. Furthermore they are cheaper than the combined costs of conventional tools used for these specific processes.

Cost

The first model costs Rs.90, the second Rs. 65, and the third model is priced at Rs.55. The replacement cost of the blades varies between Rs.15 and Rs. 20.

Though these improved sickles receive a satisfactory reception from the villagers, their adoption rate is extremely slow, feels Mr. Kishorebhai.

“Most villagers find the sickles quite useful but the price is beyond their paying capacity as the normal sickle costs only Rs.30. Only three farmers have purchased the improved sickles; the rest come and borrow these sickles from me,” he adds.

Mr. Kishorebhai is quite disillusioned that he is unable to muster adequate financial support to popularise the sickles.

Economic support

He feels that sustaining the innovative spirit needs economic support, a rare commodity he does not possess adequately.

The National Innovation Fund, Ahmedabad (NIF) sanctioned a sum of Rs. 8,250 from its Micro Venture Innovation Fund for pilot production and test marketing of these Innovative Sickles.

For more details contact Mr. Kishorebhai Bharadwa, Post. Galvav, Manavadar taluk, Junagadh district, Gujarat: 362630, Phone: 02874- 248331.

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Left Front to focus on agriculture, industry

Ananya Dutta



West Bengal Left Front Committee chairman Biman Bose releases the manifesto for the Assembly polls in Kolkata on Wednesday.

KOLKATA: Releasing the election manifesto here on Wednesday, West Bengal Left Front Committee Chairman Biman Bose said the eighth Left Front government will focus on “agriculture, industry, peace, democracy and progress,” in the State if it returns to power.

Listing the objectives of the Front in the coming five years, the manifesto states that it wants to ensure that West Bengal is one of the top-ranked States on the three parameters of the human development index — purchasing power, education and health.

“Ensuring dignity, development and employment to those who are below the poverty line,” is the Left Front's main objective. It also highlights the need for the expansion of agriculture, industry and the services sector to generate employment and increase the income of the nearly 40 lakh poor families in the State.

“The need for agriculture will remain forever. At the same time the need for industry is also a call of the times,” Mr. Bose said. The Left Front has promised that the present scheme of providing rice at Rs. 2 per kg to the below poverty line families through the public distribution system would be extended to all families earning less than Rs. 10,000 a month. In addition, essential commodities like pulses, cooking oil, sugar, biscuits and clothes would be brought under PDS.

In order to improve health services, the Left Front plans to enact a law that ensures health for all. It would cover insurance and other schemes to provide treatment for diseases that afflict most people and are life-threatening.

The manifesto also proposes a doubling of funds allocated for development schemes for the Schedules Castes, Schedules Tribes, Other Backward Classes, minorities, refugees and women and for regions, including north Bengal, the Sunderbans and the western region.

It is critical of the U.S. intervention in foreign policy and points to the “anti-people grand alliance” formed by the Trinamool, BJP, Congress, Maoists, and domestic and foreign powers.

Date:17/03/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/17/stories/2011031764330300.htm>

School students learn aspects of agriculture theory and practices

Karthik Madhavan

Six higher secondary schools offer the subject for two years

Photo: K.Ananthan



Hands-on experience: Students of Plus-Two Agricultural Practices vocational stream at Government Higher Secondary School at Bujanganur during a practical class. -

COIMBATORE: Of all the higher secondary schools in the district, six Government-run institutions stand out. Alandurai, Bhujanganur, Karamadai, Kinathukadavu, Seeranaickenpalayam, and Asokapuram teach agriculture under vocational stream.

The students of these schools get to learn 'Agricultural Practices' for two years – in Plus One and Plus Two.

Aside from the two language subjects that are common to all branches in the two classes, the students study biology, agriculture and have two practical subjects, in which they focus on crop production and protection.

The theory talks about the history and renaissance of Indian agriculture, climate in Tamil Nadu, soil condition across the State, major food crops, important horticulture crops, agriculture practices, seed and planting techniques, water management, etc.

In the two practical papers the students get to have a hands-on experience on soil test, water test, use of fertiliser, pesticide, weedicide, tissue culture, nursery management, etc. The two papers have an internal assessment for 50 marks each.

V. Soundararajan, Head Master, Government Higher Secondary School, Bhujanganur, says the students learn to identify crops, understand types of breeding plants, and study weed

management on a small plot near the school. They also visit neighbouring farms to learn about the practical side of what they study.

There are about 25 students each in Plus One and Plus Two in the school. The other five schools have more or less a similar number.

The teacher says students who score average marks in Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examination opt for the vocational course stream with an eye on securing employment. The Tamil Nadu Government has reserved 10 per cent seats in diploma and bachelor degree courses in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, fisheries, etc.

The students are also eligible to pursue courses in botany and zoology.

He says the 10 per cent reservation is a big attraction for students, as it absolves them of the need for competing with general category students. It also assures them of either employment or self-employment.

A. Parthasarathy, a final year B.Sc. Agriculture student, says his two years' exposure to agriculture in Plus One and Plus Two has put him in an advantageous position as against other students who joined the course after studying only biology.

The main strength of students like him is in practical subjects. They are also able to score well in pathology and entomology. He took up agriculture in higher secondary with an eye on securing employment and has already got one with a leading bank.

His junior J. Surendar says his passion for agriculture led him to take up a course in it in higher secondary. Students who also want to score high marks opt for agriculture.

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Exhibition of cartoons on climate change in city

Photo: M. Periasamy



With keen interest: Paul Sellers (right), Director, British Council, Chennai, takes a look at the 'Cartoon Exhibition on Climate Change' after inaugurating it at Chamber Tower in the city on Wednesday. Vice President of ICCI R.R. Balasundharam (third left), Secretary D. Nandakumar (second right) and Secretary of Association of British Scholars, Coimbatore Chapter, N.V. Sreejaya (left) are in the picture. —

COIMBATORE: Funny, sad and informative at the same time – the exhibition of cartoons on climate change is an eye opener of sorts. Organised by the British Council, Association of British Scholars and The Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Coimbatore, the exhibition has 50 award winning cartoons from India and abroad.

From the melting icebergs to the diminishing green cover, the cartoons address key issues with regard to climate change. Remember the story of the crow that drank from a near-empty jug by dropping pebbles in to it? The cartoon of a crow in a similar situation exclaiming, “Wow, how lucky grandpa was,” is a sad reminder of our depleting water resources. The cartoon of Sangeeth Davis from Kerala playfully explains how icebergs could soon become a thing of the past.

Imagine a world with people sporting oxygen masks! A lot of cartoons foretell of such a world if air-pollution increases at the current pace. Why, even dogs and nesting-birds are depicted with the masks with oxygen tanks strapped behind their backs! Cartoons by Mikhail Zlatkovsky of Russia and Constantin Ciosu of Romania, winners of the Second International Ken Sprague International Cartoon Competition, Earthworks, 2008 are also displayed. Ciosu's cartoon is most amusing. It shows a balding man being pursued by an army of butterflies. The man has seemingly plucked the last flower in an area filled with industries releasing plumes of smoke.

Geetha Prasoona B from Anantapur has depicted a grave scene from the future – robot-archaeologists dig out the remains of human beings, an extinct species. In Rahul Motiyar's cartoon of a railway platform, there are no chai sellers. Rather, there are water capsule sellers who sell 100 gm for Rs.10.

While there are a lot of rib-tickling moments, every cartoon has an inherent message that sets one thinking. Cartoons of a long row of people waiting to fetch water from the last rain cloud in the sky, a tiger taking refuge in a kitchen garden since his home is no more, businessmen trading five barrels of oil for one barrel of water etc; speak for themselves. The exhibition of cartoons on climate change is on today at Chamber Towers, Avanashi Road, between 10.30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Date:17/03/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/17/stories/2011031750460300.htm>

Wildlife census completed

Special Correspondent

COIMBATORE: Officials of the Coimbatore Forest Division on Sunday completed a three-day-long wildlife census. District Forest Officer V. Thirunavukkarasu told The Hindu that it was aimed at enumerating the population of mammals, herbivores and carnivores spread over 690 sq km.

A total of 190 volunteers and 120 field staff participated.

The forest area spread over six ranges was divided into 43 beats and 65 blocks. The staff and volunteers had a briefing on Friday on the direct count and indirect count for enumerating wildlife besides adopting the waterhole count and block count methods.

The direct count was based on sighting of animals while indirect counting was based on scat, scratch marks on barks of trees telltale signs on the soil. The census on the field was conducted last week. The census output would help forest managers plan strategies, including habitat improvement programmes.

The data collected by the census volunteers and staff would be compiled in the next couple of days.

Date:17/03/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/17/stories/2011031756320500.htm>

Bird lovers in Ooty to discuss ways to save common bird species

Special Correspondent

In connection with celebration of World Sparrow Day

File Photo: K.R. Deepak



Disappearing fast: Sparrows perched on the branches of a tree as the sun rises. Sparrows that were once seen in abundance have become a rare sight in cities. –

Udhagamandalam: In connection with the celebration of World Sparrow Day on March 20, a programme would be organized by the forest department in association with bird enthusiasts at the HADP auditorium here at 11 a.m. on March 19.

Stating that the objective is to create awareness about the significance of the house sparrow among various sections of the society, particularly school and college students, P.J.Vasanthan, an authority on birds in general and those of the Nilgiris in particular, told The Hindu here on Wednesday that the proposed programme will underscore the need to conserve the common bird species and urban biodiversity.

Pointing out that the reasons for the species being threatened with extinction ranged from the destruction of its habitat to lack of insect food for its young and even the increasing microwave

pollution from mobile phone towers, he said that an alarming change noticed during a recent survey was that the sparrows were hard to come by even in the tribal hamlets of the Nilgiris.

Date:17/03/2011 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/17/stories/2011031756210300.htm>

'Cultivators of aromatic, medicinal plants have a bright future'

Staff Reporter

KHAMMAM: Envisioning a bright future for cultivators of aromatic and medicinal plants in the district, K.P. Sarma, Director of Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CIMAP), has called upon them to tap the vibrant market potential for the produce across the world. Speaking at a workshop organised under the aegis of the District Water Management Agency, horticulture and other allied government departments here on Wednesday, he said the country, which was endowed with rich flora and fauna, had been excelling in the cultivation and export of both aromatic and medicinal plants.

He said that CIMAP was striving to create awareness and extend all kinds of support to the farmers desirous of cultivating the plants.

Earlier, in his inaugural address, Collector N. Nageswara Rao exhorted farmers to take up cultivation according to the guidance issued by CIMAP subject experts to reap a rich harvest.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2011/03/17/stories/2011031767330500.htm>

Surprise check at onion market

Special Correspondent

TIRUCHI: A flying squad, comprising election and police officials, conducted surprise checks at the Vengaiya Mandi, a market of wholesale onion traders near the Gandhi Market in the city, on Wednesday. The officials were apparently looking for cash suspected to have been stashed away in some of the shops. The officials verified the

balance and accounts in six shops. However, no seizures were made and officials said there was no indication of money being kept for purposes other than business.

The team was led by A.Jagatheeswari, assistant commissioner, Tiruchi Corporation.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Thursday, Mar 17

Max Min
32.8° | 23.6°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:16

Sunset: 18:19

Barometer: 1007.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Friday, Mar 18

Max Min
34° | 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday
Mar 19



30° | 23°
Cloudy

Sunday
Mar 20



28° | 25°
Rainy

Monday
Mar 21



31° | 24°
Rainy

Tuesday
Mar 22



32° | 24°
Partly Cloudy

Wednesday
Mar 23



32° | 24°
Partly Cloudy

17 Mar, 2011, 12.19AM IST, Jayashree Bhosale & Man Mohan Rai,ET Bureau

Sugar prices to surge on costlier cane

PUNE/LUCKNOW: The cost of making sugar in India will rise to at least Rs 27 per kilo from October onwards after the Central government increased the minimum price of sugar cane by more than 4%. That would be good news for farmers planting cane in full swing across the country, and banking on a good harvest.

But chances of a bumper cane production and a higher supply of sugar are worrying mills in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. They will have an even higher cost of production because they are expected to pay farmers significantly more than the minimum support price. If sugar prices remain low in the retail market, it could well dent corporate balance sheets.

Government on Wednesday raised the fair and minimum price (FRP) for sugar from Rs 139.2/quintal in 2010-11 to Rs 145/quintal in 2011-12.

N Ramanathan, president of industry body South Indian Sugar Mills Association, said, "With the FRP going up by Rs 60/tonne, the state advisory price may also go up by Rs 75/tonne. This means the break-even price for mills may go up from Rs 27/kg now to Rs 28/kg. Thus, if the sugar price does not remain above Rs 30/kg, a price war between farmers and sugar mills may take place."

Ramanathan said the cane area in Tamil Nadu is not likely to increase in 2011-12 as cultivation and harvesting costs have increased considerably. "The sugar cane price in Tamil Nadu was increased by 25% from Rs 1,600/tonne to Rs 2,000/tonne. Yet, cane sowing during the first five months from October has remained flat," he said.

In Uttar Pradesh, the cost of producing sugar in UP is already at Rs 30/kg. Millers say they expect the next season to be worse than the current year as the state administered price, which is currently Rs 210/quintal, may go up substantially. Cane acreage may expand from the current 21 lakh hectares to 23 lakh hectares, which will increase sugar production and reduce prices in the open market, said UP Sugar Mills Association secretary general Shyam Lal Gupta.

In Maharashtra, the largest sugar producer, millers have welcomed the higher cane price move as it will encourage more farmers to plant cane.

Thu, Mar 17, 2011 | Updated 09.41AM IST

17 Mar, 2011, 12.16AM IST, S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Anti-dumping duty on shrimp stays

KOCHI: The US International Trade Commission (USITC) on Wednesday decided to continue with the existing antidumping duty order on shrimp imported from India for another five years.

The commission has said that the revoking of the existing antidumping duty order on shrimp imported from India, China, Brazil, Thailand and Vietnam would injure the shrimp industry in the US. The decision has come as a major blow to the seafood export industry, which will have to pay the antidumping duty for five more years. US' share in total seafood exports would be around 17%. A major share of this is shrimp. The share of shrimp in total seafood exports is 55%.

"Those who are currently exporting to the US can continue to ship products at the existing duty but the new entrants will have to pay the original duty of 10.17%," said Anwar Hashim, the president of the Seafood Exporters Association (SEAI), an exporters' body that fought the original antidumping case in US. The US decided to levy an antidumping duty on warm-water shrimp from India and a few other countries in 2004 at a rate of 10.17%. SEAI fought against it

but lost the case.

The successive administrative reviews done by the US Department of Commerce brought down the duty to 7.22% and to 0.79% by the third review. The duty increased to 2.67% in the fourth review. The preliminary rates announced for the fifth review stands at 1.69%. The present decision comes under the five-year sunset review process, the USITC explained.

Before the anti-dumping duty was announced, there were around 350 to 400 seafood processors exporting to the US. The anti-dumping duty and the huge financial burden required for the payment of US customs bond led to a sharp fall in their numbers. Today, there are only 60 to 70 units exporting to the US.

The US was the largest importer of seafood from India before the anti-dumping duty was announced. Subsequently, it became the fourth largest importer. With the fall in the duty rate, the exports to the US have again increased. Today, the US is the second largest importer of seafood from the country. Total seafood exports from India are targetted to touch \$2.5 billion this year.

17 Mar, 2011, 12.12AM IST,ET Bureau

Japan disaster shakes commodities, prices fall

KOLKATA/PUNE/AHMEDABAD/KOCHI: Commodity prices in India have dropped in line with global markets which fell for the fifth successive day on concern that Japanese demand will take a while to pick up after the strongest earthquake in its history damaged northern parts of the country. Jittery traders moved out of agricommodities to safe haven bullion which edged up in Asia on Wednesday.

The softening in commodity prices comes as a welcome relief to Indian manufacturers who have been grappling with high raw material prices for several months now. Sectors that will

immediately benefit include tyres, food and beverage, cooking oil, meat and livestock. Car companies too will benefit as the prices of two precious metals - palladium and platinum used in catalytic converters - have dropped.

Gold and silver both edged up in Asia on Wednesday as equity markets stabilised, eliminating the margin-related selling that depressed precious metals on Tuesday. The most-active gold for April delivery on the Multi Commodity Exchange was trading 0.33% higher at Rs 20,672 per 10 gram, after hitting a high of Rs 20,690. The contract recovered from a one-month low of Rs 20,469 struck in the previous session, a level last seen on February 16.

Platinum group metals fell because potential radiation disasters weakened expectations of demand from the Japanese automotive industry. Japan's leading carmakers, including Toyota , Nissan , and Honda, have decided to stop production. Automakers are the largest consumer of platinum and palladium. Spot platinum on Wednesday was off \$14 at \$1,687/oz, after dropping 3% Tuesday, while spot palladium was at \$710/oz, up \$5 after plunging 5% in the previous session. "A drop in platinum and palladium prices augurs well for the automobile industry. Both these precious metals are used in catalytic converters to check emission," said P Balendran, VP, General Motors India.

The agricommodity sector has been hit the most, with sugar leading the pack. Despite the falling global sugar prices, the sugar industry is desperate to export as the domestic prices are hovering between Rs 2,550 per quintal and Rs 2,800 per quintal. "The falling global prices mean that the premium on sugar that we could get over the domestic price has reduced substantially. It is still viable for India to export sugar, provided the decision is taken very quickly before the global prices fall further," said Abinash Verma, managing director, Indian Sugar Mills Association.

Maharashtra Cooperative Sugar Mills Federation MD Prakash Naiknavare feels that the Japan crisis has not been the lone contributor to this drastic price fall. "International sugar price has

fallen from the all-time high of \$857 f.o.b. on February 2 to \$ 667 f.o.b. today largely due to the opening up of the futures trading of Brazilian sugar than due to the crisis in Japan." The average ex-mill without duty sugar price in Maharashtra on Wednesday hovered around Rs 2,550/quintal. A sliding sugar price will help food and beverage-base companies.

Domestic soyameal prices have seen a fall by 5% in line with global commodity markets.

"Soyameal prices have come down to \$390-\$395 FAS (free alongside ship) per tonne from \$402 to \$405 FAS per tonne in the past few days," said Atul Chaturvedi, CEO of Adani Wilmar. Incidentally, on National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), April soyoil futures were down by 0.15% at Rs 605.85 per 10 kg. The Soya bean April contract on NCDEX was trading at Rs 2,265 per quintal, which was down by 0.57%. Similarly, the April contract of rapeseed was down by 0.26% at Rs 2,695 per quintal. The consumers of edible oil may heave a sigh of relief if price fall for a few days.

A slump in the global cocoa prices is viewed by Indian chocolate manufacturers as a temporary phenomenon, which is unlikely to have a long-term effect. International cocoa prices fell 4% to \$3,255 on ICE. "This drop is due to the crisis in Japan and may not last long. It will not reflect on the Indian cocoa prices," AS Bhat, managing director of Campco, said. The Indian dry cocoa bean prices have been hovering at around Rs 160 per kg for some time now.

The global cocoa prices have been on the decline during this month due to a ban on exports in Ivory Coast, the largest producer. "The slide in the coffee price may help in raising the demand for Indian coffee globally," said Ramesh Rajah, president, Coffee Exporters Association of India. Indian coffee exports are heading for an all-time high for the current fiscal. It touched 2,87,396 tonnes, a 47% increase, on March 9.

Global coffee prices had been climbing on concerns of a short supply with principal producer Brazil reporting a lower production. But on Wednesday both Robusta and Arabica prices have

declined. "The current slide is linked to Japanese crisis and not connected to demand and supply per se," said Jawaid Akthar, chairman of Coffee Board.

Business Standard

Thursday, Mar 17, 2011

US anti-dumping duty on Indian frozen shrimp imports to stay

George Joseph / Kochi March 17, 2011, 0:31 IST

To the dismay of the Indian seafood export sector, the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) has ordered to continue with the anti-dumping duty imposed on frozen shrimp imports from India for the next five years.

A commission panel, comprising of six judges, voted 5-1 in favour of continuing the duty as revocation of the duty may hamper the prospects of local shrimp producers. USITC has rejected a petition filed by the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) in this regard.

In the first week of this month, the US Department of Commerce (DoC) announced the preliminary results of the fifth administrative review (AR) of the anti-dumping duty. The average duty for India was reduced to 1.69 per cent from 2.67 per cent.

Falcon Marine Exports and Apex Exports, the two mandatory respondents of the review, would attract a duty of 1.36 per cent and 2.31 per cent respectively. These rates were effective for a period of one-year commencing February 1, 2009.

The anti dumping duty on frozen shrimp imports from India to the US was imposed provisionally with effect from August 4, 2004 and the levy was confirmed through the anti-dumping duty order dated February 1, 2005.

According to the order, the average duty imposed on Indian companies was 10.17 per cent and in the first AR this was reduced to 7.22 per cent. This was further reduced to 1.69 per cent in the

second AR and to 0.79 per cent in the third review. But, to the dismay of Indian exporters, the duty was raised to 2.67 per cent in the next round.

The Indian seafood export sector was hoping for 'nil duty' as the duty was being reduced in each round of the AR. (Duty below 0.50 per cent is considered as nil duty.)

US is the second largest importer of frozen shrimp, with a 17.43 per cent share of the total Indian seafood exports of 547,249 tonnes valued at Rs 9,187.18 crore in April-December period of the current financial year. The US market registered a remarkable growth of 110.68 per cent in dollar realisation and 49.13 per cent in terms of quantity during the period.

Now, the Indian seafood export sector is hitching hopes on the final results of the fifth AR. But the verdict of USITC is a serious setback at this juncture. The final result of the fifth AR would be crucial to India's seafood exports to the US market.



Narmada board okays three new irrigation proposals

March 17, 2011 11:21:39 AM

The Narmada Control Board (NCB) in its meeting chaired by the Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan at Vidhan Sabha here on Wednesday cleared three proposals regarding creation of additional irrigation capacity on 91,160 hectare.

According to the proposals submitted by the Narmada Valley Development Authority to the NCB, Khargone lift canal system and Omkareshwar lift canal system would be completed in two phases.

The Chief Minister approved the proposals saying that harnessing the Narmada water for

irrigation to speed up development is the priority of the State. He asked the officers concerned to ensure that the results are visible in a time limit.

It was informed that a sum of `550.88 crore would be spent on construction of Khargone lift canal and distribution system. On completion, it will irrigate 33,140 hectare. Omkareshwar lift canal and distribution system would cost `519.93 crore to create irrigation capacity on 28,073 hectare. The second phase of construction would involve `349.30 crore creating 239,947 hectare. Both the lift canal systems would additionally irrigate 91,160 hectare.

The water for Khargone lift canal would be lifted from the main canal of Indira Sagar Project. Similarly, lifting of water for Omkareshwar lift canal system would be done from the main right canal of lift Omkareshwar project. It may be noted here that the proposals for this were invited through e-tendering for greater transparency.

Vice-chairman of the NVDA OP Rawat informed that work orders would soon be issued so that construction works are completed on time.

Minister for Finance Raghavji, Minister for Forest Sartaj Singh, Minister for Water Resources Jayant Malaiya, Minister for Agriculture Ramkrishna Kusmaria, Minister for Revenue Karan Singh Verma, Minister for Energy Rajendra Shukla, Minister of State for Narmada Valley Development KL Agrawal, Chief Secretary Avani Vaish, principal secretaries of concerning departments attended the meeting.

Congress seeks panel to probe seed distribution

March 17, 2011 11:23:08 AM

Alleging irregularities in the distribution of wheat seeds on subsidised rates among the farmers, Congress MLAs on Wednesday demanded the constitution of a committee to probe into the matter.

Raising the issue, Congress MLA Sunil Kumar Jakhar asked the State Government to verify the names of the farmers to whom the seeds have been distributed on subsidy. Jakhar alleged that the seed distributed have gone to the private millers.

The issue came into the notice of the House during the Question Hour. Replying to Jakhar's question, Agriculture Minister Sucha Singh Langah informed the House that the sale of wheat seed on subsidy was started by the agriculture department from October 20 during 2010 and the total sale of wheat seed on subsidy was 542677 quintals.

To this, Jakhar claimed that the sale of seed did not start on the said date but on different dates in November. "I have the information received from Agriculture Department under RTI which says that the sale of seed started on November 9 in Mansa, November 4 in Batala, November 1 in Muktsar and so on," Jakhar said.

Jakhar alleged that the allocation of money has been considerably went down, and out of the Rs 35 crore allocated fund, only Rs 28 crore has been utilized by the department so far. To which Langah responded to have distributed Rs 27.33 crore as subsidies.

The discussion entered into heated exchange of words when Jakhar pointed out that the Committee promised to be constituted in the previous session is still hanging fire. Responding, Langah said: "The committee has been formed by the Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal himself and even you (Jakhar) have been asked to be a member of it to look into the procedure. Is this the way?"

Jakhar replied that he had not been informed about the formation of a committee except one call by Langah. "When he called me, I told him when Chief Minister will ask him, he will proceed. Since then, I have heard neither from CM saab nor from agriculture minister," he added. Later, Congress legislators Avtar Singh Brar and Harmohinder Singh Jassi too seconded Jakhar's plea to form a House committee and conduct thorough probe into the matter.

Intervening, Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal declared the setting up of two-member committee including SAD MLA Virsa Singh Valtoha and Jakhar. However, Jakhar refused to be a part of it saying as he had raised the issue, he did not want to be part of investigating team.

PRTC to pay over Rs 1.70 cr to retired employees: PRTC has yet to pay over Rs 1.70 crore to the retired employees. A total of Rs 1,70,55,000 has to be paid by the PRTC, though the date by which the arrears will be paid is unknown. The maximum of Rs 40.98 lakhs are lying pending with the PRTC's Chandigarh Depot, followed by Bathinda with Rs 23.46 lakh, PRTC head-office in Nabha, Patiala with Rs 20.72 lakh, Kapurthala with Rs 20.20 lakh and so on.

These startling facts came into light in a reply given by Transport Minister Master Mohan Lal to the question raised by the Congress MLA Sukhpal Singh Khaira regarding the payments of retired PRTC employees. The reason cited for the delay in paying pensions and other benefits to the retired employees was the shortage of funds.

Minister Mohan Lal explained as the "passenger fare has not been increased in accordance with the price hike in diesel, due to which the PRTC is unable to pay pensionary benefits in time to the retirees". Further, the reply stated that the full pension has been paid regularly to the retirees and retrial benefits have been paid upto September 30, 2010 and the gratuity has also been paid upto December 31, 2010.

District status for Batala: The issue of formation of new districts was echoed in the Punjab Vidhan Sabha on Wednesday. Fighting for seeking district status to his constituency in the field since long, this time BJP MLA Jagdish Rai Sawhney reiterated its demand to make Batala a district in the State Assembly, saying that Batala fulfills all criteria of being a district.

Participating in the Budget Debate, Sawhney claimed that the Cabinet Sub-Committee, including Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal and Industries and Local Government Minister Manoranjan Kalia, formed for considering the demand on the formation of new districts

and sub-divisions has not conducted even a single meeting.

“Sukhbir-Kalia committee formed for this purpose has not sat even once for all this while and in Batala we are conducting 48-days continuous strike,” said Sawhney.

THE HINDU Business Line

Tsunami hits mango exporters' Japan hopes



THE HINDU Mangoes arranged for display along a national highway in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. (File Photo)

Hyderabad, March 16:

Mango exporters are in for a big disappointment as massive earthquake and tsunami devastated Japan. Exports of mangoes and pulp, which have just picked up in the last few years, to Japan are likely to be hit with tsunami plunging the Far East country into a serious crisis.

The country exported 55 tonnes of fresh mangoes and 2,500 tonnes of mango pulp to Japan. It constitutes 5 per cent to overall agriculture exports to the country, exporters see an unfolding opportunity in this segment. "It is a very promising market and the teaser exports in the last few years have gained significant attraction from the market there," Mr Raj Gaddam, Managing Director of Srinivasa Food Park, told Business Line.

APEDA (Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) has set up two VHTs (vapour heat treatment) plants at Nuziveedu in Andhra Pradesh to help the farmers and exporters treat mangoes to suit the stringent rules prescribed by Japanese Government.

The crisis in Japan has unnerved the exporters. "Last year, we could not export much. But this year it seems we will have bountiful produce. We thought we could reap good returns. But the developments in the last one week in Japan disappointed us. We are seeing things with our fingers crossed," a mango exporter confessed.

Mr Raj Gaddam, however, said that they spoke to their partners in Japan. "They assured that there would be an intake of at least two tonnes a week during the season," he said.

Even if exports to Japan were impacted, the exporters need not lose heart. "We have a commitment from Spain to take 10 tonnes," he said.

Mr Asit Tripathy, Chairman of APEDA, subscribed to this view. "Japan is not a major export market for India for its agriculture products. It contributes just about Rs 125 crore to our overall agriculture exports," he said.

India's exports to Japan stood at 17,000 tonnes in 2009-10 as against the overall agriculture exports to the tune of 1.11 crore tonnes valued at Rs 34,825 crore.

Westerly system to cap heating over North-West



India Meteorological dept satellite picture at 16-30 hrs

Thiruvananthapuram, March 16:

An incoming western disturbance parked on Wednesday evening over north Pakistan is expected to move east to impact weather in the western Himalayan region and adjoining plains until early next week.

An India Meteorological Department (IMD) outlook has maintained a watch for welcome showers or thundershowers to break out over Punjab.

The cooler western disturbance would now be able to smother the emerging spike in mercury tending to grow from the southwest for the time being.

The IMD has said that a gradual rise in maximum and minimum temperatures is likely over many parts of the country over the next three days.

Northwest India could be the sole exception to this trend thanks to the calming influence of the western disturbance.

Heat wave conditions would prevail over isolated pockets of west Rajasthan and Gujarat during this period.

Minimum temperatures were above normal by 2 to 5 deg Celsius over parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat and by 2 to 4 deg C over parts of Punjab and west Uttar Pradesh during the 24 hours ending on Wednesday evening.

But they were below normal by 2 to 4 deg Celsius over parts of the Northeastern States, Gangetic West Bengal, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Vidarbha.

This is attributed mainly to the presence of the trough in the lower levels of the atmosphere running down from north Orissa to west-central Bay of Bengal.

Though shifting alignment almost on a daily basis over the past week or so, the trough has been persisting in the region, and with it associated clouding and thundershowers.

The lowest minimum temperature of 11.6 deg Celsius was recorded at Adampur in Punjab.

Satellite pictures showed presence of convective clouds over parts of north Jammu and Kashmir and southwest Bay of Bengal.

The upper air cyclonic circulation over southwest Bay of Bengal and adjoining Sri Lanka too persisted.

Widespread rainfall was reported from Andaman and Nicobar Islands while it was isolated over Orissa and Coastal Andhra Pradesh.

A short-term forecast said that widespread rain or thundershowers would occur over Andaman and Nicobar Islands until Thursday evening.

Isolated rain or snowfall would unfold over western Himalayan region and increase thereafter during this period.

Scattered rain or thundershowers has been forecast over sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim and the Northeastern States from Thursday onwards.

APEDA asks States to promote contract farming in a big way



Mr Anil Kumar V. Epur, Chairman, Task Force on Agriculture, CII-AP; Dr K.R.K. Reddy, Managing Director, Sri BioTech and Mr Asit Tripathy, IAS, Chairman of Agriculture and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority, at the conference on Agro Exports from Andhra Pradesh, in Hyderabad on Wednesday. – Photo: P.V. Sivakuma

Hyderabad, March 16:

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) has asked States to promote contract farming to address a serious structural challenge Indian agriculture sector faces.

“Contract farming is happening in many shapes in different parts of the country. Because of small holdings, farmers are not able to invest and see surplus produce,” Mr Asit Tripathy, Chairman of APEDA, said.

Delivering the keynote address at a conference on ‘Agro exports from Andhra Pradesh – present emerging scenario’ here on Wednesday, he said most of agri exports were happening because of contract farming.

The conference was jointly organised by APEDA and Confederation of Indian Industry.

Stating that the country was yet to tap the full export potential for agricultural produce, he said half of the \$8.5 billion worth exports went just to the Gulf. “We are yet to fully tap the Gulf market itself. What we are addressing is the demands from expatriate Indians,” he said.

Think beyond Gulf

“We need to think of exports to the other South-East Asian countries, and not only focus on the Gulf. Andhra Pradesh being on the East Coast could play a vital role in this,” he said. The moves to invite FDI in multi-brand retail would also help the agriculture sector. The MNCs would prefer to source directly from the producer instead of going to *mandis*. “There is immense scope for enhancing agri production from Andhra Pradesh as it has a good base of both enterprise and infrastructure. Agriculture enterprise has a potential source of making money”, he said. Ms Shailaja Ramaiyer, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director of AP AGROS (an AP Government agency), asked APEDA to set up a dedicated agency in States to coordinate with different Government Departments to promote exports.

Spot rubber prices recover



Business Line Rubber being poured

Kottayam, March 16:

Rubber prices continued to recover from the recent losses on Wednesday. The physical market strengthened followed by the sharp gains on the NMCE and TOCOM. The report that the disaster and subsequent nuclear plant meltdowns and explosions in Japan do not have significant impact on rubber demand from the country had a positive impact on the global markets.

Hence the domestic prices firmed up on fresh buying and short covering as sellers stayed back expecting market to recover in the days ahead. The disaster is unlikely to have a noticeable impact on global economy also according to the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries (ANRPC).

In spot, sheet rubber improved to Rs 202 (187.50) a kg according to traders. The grade firmed up to Rs 201 (187) a kg as reported by the Rubber Board.

In futures, the April series flared up hitting the upper circuit at Rs 213.92 (205.70), May at Rs 219.14 (210.72), June at Rs 225.24 (216.58) and July at Rs 226.74 (218.02) a kg for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

RSS 3 (spot) closed firm at Rs 204.62 (201.38) a kg at Bangkok. The March futures for the grade bounced back to ¥383.5 (Rs 214.50) from ¥361 a kg during the day session and then to ¥395 (Rs 220.92) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM). Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 202 (187.50); RSS-5: 199 (184); ungraded: 194 (180); ISNR 20: 198 (183) and latex 60 per cent: 115 (115).

Coonoor tea auction volume slides



Business Line A file picture of workers plucking tea at an estate near Coonoor in Tamil Nadu.

Coonoor, March 16:

A volume of 10.57 lakh kg will be offered for Sale No. 11 of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association (CTTA) auctions to be conducted on Thursday and Friday, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers.

This is 62,000 kg less than last week's offer and as much as 3.93 lakh kg less than the offer this time last year.

Of the 10.57 lakh kg on offer, 7.45 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 3.12 lakh kg to the dust grades. As much as 9.90 lakh kg is of CTC variety and only 0.67 lakh kg, orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both the leaf and dust grades. In the leaf counter, only 0.42 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 7.03 lakh kg, CTC. Among the dusts, only 0.25 lakh kg belongs to orthodox while 2.87 lakh kg, CTC.

Japan disaster

In the 10.57 lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 8.84 lakh kg and teas remaining unsold in previous auctions, 1.73 lakh kg. Last week, about 27 per cent of the offer remained unsold due to inadequate demand. Shipments to Japan have come to a standstill after the tsunami disaster there.

Even companies which have entered into direct export agreement are facing difficulty to honour commitments. "We are also uncertain about getting our payment given the magnitude of the disaster there, but we want to be generous in this hour of grief," an exporter told *Business Line*.

Dakshina Kannada looks to follow Kerala in paddy planting



Role model in promoting paddy cultivation.

Mangalore, March 15:

The Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat has suggested the Karnataka Government to emulate Kerala in promoting paddy cultivation in the district.

This was resolved at the KDP (Karnataka Development Programme) Review Committee meeting here on Tuesday.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Padmayya Naik, Joint Director of Agriculture, Mangalore, said that the extent of paddy cultivation is coming down in the coastal districts of Karnataka. Most of the paddy fields are either being converted for horticulture or for some non-agricultural activities.

Mr Sampath Samrajya, President of the District Krishik Samaj, said that the Kerala Government gives monetary benefits to farmers who switch over to paddy cultivation from other commercial crops. Such facilities should be extended in Dakshina Kannada district also, he said.

Task force

The meeting was told that Kerala Government has constituted a paddy task force. The members of this task force take up cultivation activities at the fields of farmers for a fee. This helps farmers who find it difficult to get farm labours.

The meeting was informed that the task force model can be adopted in Dakshina Kannada district also.

Mr P. Shivashankar, Chief Executive Officer of Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat, said that this idea would be forwarded to the Government for consideration.

The meeting also discussed the lack of interest among the youth about taking agriculture as their profession. Mr Samrajya suggested that school children be taken on study trips to the fields of progressive farmers. This may help create curiosity among them about agriculture.

The meeting decided to ask the Department of Public Instructions to issue necessary directions to schools in the district in this regard. Ms K.T. Shailaja Bhat, President of Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat, chaired the meeting.

Payment troubles halt tea exports to Egypt



Kochi, March 16:

Exports of Indian teas to Egypt remain almost suspended ever since the outbreak of political crisis in the north African nation, negatively affecting the tea shipments from the country, according to export sources.

While the impact of Egyptian crisis has made some significant impact on the Indian tea exports, the current turmoil in other north African and Gulf countries such as Libya and Yemen is impacting indirectly the Indian tea shipments, according to the trade sources and the Upasi.

Payment problems

Export sources here said that payment problems in the absence of a stable Government in Cairo, at present, had stopped shipments.

“There are enquiries from the private importers in Egypt but, we are not confident about the payment and in fact, we are afraid”, Mr Vikram Dholakia, a Kochi-based major tea exporter told *Business Line*.

He said the Egyptian Government used to import around 12,000 tonnes and the private sector imported 55,000 tonnes a year.

“We expect that some positive developments would take place in another week or so”, he said.

Hub

Egypt functions as a hub for the Indian tea as from there it is supplied to other markets in north Africa by the private operators, he said.

Meanwhile, the rejection of tea consignments by Iraq has also affected negatively the Indian tea exports. The importers having money problems rejected the consignments wrongly citing ostensible discrepancy in quality, he alleged and urged the Union Government to take it up with the authorities.

The activities of the India Tea Promotion Centre in Cairo, set up by the Tea Board and Upasi to promote sale of south Indian teas, have also come to a standstill as no fresh shipments have taken place for the past few months, Mr Ullas Menon, Secretary, Upasi, told *Business Line*.

But, he expressed the optimism that the new government which may come to power in the coming days might opt for quality teas rather than the price and other considerations and in that case chances are going to be bright for the Indian teas.

Global output

Any way, the current fall in exports to these regions would not impact the tea prices given the fall in global tea output so far this year, Mr Sanjith, Head (Commodities), Upasi said.

Kenya is the major supplier of tea to Egypt and the Kenyan production is down by 1.71 million kg to 36 mkg in January this year from 37.7 mkg in January 2010, and, hence, its exports to Egypt has also declined, he said.

There has been a decline of 13.4 million kg in January 2011 in the combined output of India, Kenya, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Malawi, according to the statistics available, he said. As against the output of 96.7 mkg in 2010 it was at 83.3 mkg in January 2010.

All India production dropped by 6.2 mkg to 20.9 mkg in January 2011 from 27.1 mkg in Jan 2010. The south India output in February is also lower by 2 per cent from that of the the same month last year. When added it to the Jan decline in output, the overall deficit in Jan–Feb would come to 4.5 mkg – 4.75 mkg, he said.

Kochi sale

Arrivals at the Kochi auction during Jan–March 2011 showed a drop of 1.02 mkg to 15.08 mkg from 16.1 mkg in the same period last year, Kochi Tea Trade Association sources said.

However, the summer showers in the growing areas in the high ranges of Kerala and Tamil Nadu is expected to improve the production in March, Mr Sanjith said.

At the same time, they said, the turmoil in Libya has not made any impact on tea exports as no direct shipments of tea from India has been taking place for about a decade. Probably,

consequent to the unrest in these countries Indian tea exports declined by 1.2 mkg in January 2011 to 15.8 mkg from 17 mkg in January 2010, he said.

However, good demand from other traditional markets coupled with strong domestic demand and a squeeze in supply due to decline in production has been keeping the prices firm. The total average price of south Indian tea during Jan to March 3 (up to 8/9 sale) stood at Rs 76.75 a kg as against Rs 74.10 in the same period in 2010.

In all-India, it was at Rs 91.94 a kg during the period in 2011 as against Rs 91.27 a kg in Jan-March 3 period in 2010, he said.

Rice firm on slack trading



Business Line Harvested paddy being packed in gunny bags at a paddy field near Thrissur. File Photo: K. K. Mustafah

Karnal, March 16:

Prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice ruled almost unchanged on Wednesday with trading being slack.

The market had witnessed an uptrend at the beginning of this week but it's unlikely to see big rallies in near future as bulk buyers are still keeping themselves out of the market, said Mr Parveen Kumar, a rice miller. Market may continue to rule around current levels in this week, he added.

Prices of Pusa 1121 rice (steam) ruled at Rs 5,180-5,250 a quintal, Pusa-1121(sela) ruled at Rs 4,200-4,330, and Pusa-1121(raw) at Rs 5,100-5,140. Basmati (sela) was sold at Rs 6,200-6,250 and basmati (raw) at Rs 7,300-7,340. Prices of duplicate basmati ruled at Rs 3,960-4,060 a quintal. Broken such as, Tibar was quoted at Rs 3,000-3,520, Dubar at Rs 2,200-2,625 and Mongra was at Rs 1,900-2,120. Sharbati (sela) quoted at around Rs 2,600-2,720 while the Sharbati (steam) at Rs 3,000-3,165. Permal (sela) ruled at Rs 1,900-2,110 and Permal (steam) was at Rs 2,100-2,190 a quintal. For the broken of Sharbati variety, Tibar was quoted at Rs 2,450, Dubar was at 2,120 and Mongra was at Rs 1,490.

Paddy Trading

Around 90 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and were sold at Rs 2,100-2,400 a quintal. Around 100 bags of pure basmati arrived and were sold at Rs 2,400-2,630 a quintal.

Palmolein dips on weak global cues



Mumbai, March 16:

Edible oils witnessed a mixed trend on Wednesday. Palmolein continued to slip on a weak Malaysian market, soya futures at Indore NBOT bounced back and the decline of soya oil was arrested in spot and futures. Sunflower oil eased Rs 5, rapeseed oil dipped Rs 9, cotton oil declined Rs 4 and palmolein lost Rs 4 for 10 kg. Groundnut and soya oils ruled steady. Reports that China's soybean acreage may fall 11 per cent this year also supported soya and related commodities.

Most traders have liquidated their positions and are waiting for the crisis in Japan to unfold. New reports about radiation from the damaged nuclear power plants pressed palm oil as speculators sold in the market, sources said.

In the local market, about 250-300 tonnes of palmolein was traded in resale on need-based buying at Rs 552-555. Direct trade with refineries was absent as resale was cheaper. Buying to build up stocks has stopped after more than 2,500 tonnes of palmolein was bought directly from refineries on Tuesday. Higher arrivals of seeds and anticipation of even higher arrivals after *Holi* checked volumes and new demand of indigenous oils. In Mumbai, resalers quoted palmolein for Rs 554-555, taking cues from firm foreign markets. At the refinery level, Liberty increased the rates by Rs 2 to Rs Rs 560-562 for palmolein, and eventually stopped quoting. Ruchi's rates for palmolein were Rs 557-559, for soya refined oil Rs 605 and sunflower oil Rs 675. Allana quoted palmolein at Rs 559. In Rajkot, groundnut oil gained by Rs 10 to Rs 1,155 (Rs 1,145) for *telia* tin and Rs 745 (Rs 745) for loose 10 kg. **Malaysia's CPO futures - NBOT futures:**

Malaysia's BMD CPO contracts for April closed lower by MYR28 at MYR3,400 (MYR3,428), for May at MYR3,368 (MYR3,385) and for June at MYR3,347 (MYR3,379) a tonne. Indore NBOT soya oil's April contract closed higher at Rs 605.50 (Rs 605.40).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rates (Rs/10kg): Groundnut oil 740 (740), soya refined oil 595 (595), sunflower exp. ref. 635 (635), sunflower ref. 680 (685), rapeseed ref. oil 608 (617), rapeseed expeller ref. 578 (587), cotton ref. oil 588 (592) and palmolein was 556 (560).

Groundnut steady on tepid demand



Rajkot, March 16:

Groundnut oil remained unchanged on tepid demand. Cotton seed oil increased nominally by Rs 5 a tin in Gujarat.

Groundnut loose for 10 kg was traded at Rs 735-740. Groundnut oil for a 15-kg new tin was at Rs 1,270-1,275 and for a *telia* tin at Rs 1,144-1,145 for 15 kg. Cotton seed oil (wash) sold at Rs 552-555 for 10 kg, cotton seed oil for a 15-kg new tin increased Rs 5 to Rs 970-980 and for a 15 litre-tin was traded at Rs 915-920 in Rajkot.

A Rajkot-based miller said, "Currently, groundnut oil is sustaining on retail demand. Moreover enough raw material is available, so price will remain at this level."

Momentary rise

Cotton seed oil has increased slowly, as raw cotton supply is low. But market men said it was a momentary rise. Price may reduce as demand is nominal for cotton seed oil.

According to the Agriculture Ministry, so far summer groundnut sowing has covered 8.62 lakh hectares. Last year, it was 9.94 lakh hectares for this period. In Saurashtra, sowing has doubled from 35,531 hectares to 71,110 hectares so far.

Honorary Fellowship Award

Kochi, March 16:

The 'Bioved Research Society' based at Allahabad has conferred this year's Honorary Fellowship Award to Dr T.K. Srinivasa Gopal, Director, Central Institute of Fisheries Technology, Kochi. The award was conferred in recognition of his contributions in the field of fish processing technology. The award was given away at the 13th Indian Agricultural Scientists and Farmers Congress, jointly organised by CSIR, DRDO and Nabard, at Allahabad University

Foodgrains merchants seek ban on FDI in retail sector

Madurai, March 16:

The Tamil Nadu Foodgrains Merchants Association, in a release here said that its president Mr S.P. Jeyaprakasam along with the office-bearers of the association and Member of Parliament Mr N.S.V. Chithan met Mr Jyothiraditya Sinha, Union Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, at New Delhi on Thursday last and submitted a memorandum, urging a ban foreign direct investment in retail trade sector.

US extends levy on shrimp imports from India



Washington, March 16:

The US has extended for five years the anti-dumping duties on import of warm water shrimps from India, China, Brazil, Thailand and Vietnam.

The US International Trade Commission (ITC) voted 5-1 on Tuesday to extend the current duties until 2016 on all these five countries.

“The ITC correctly recognised that the anti-dumping duty order is needed to give the shrimp industry in the Gulf of Mexico a chance to compete, survive and prosper,” said a welcome joint statement by three lawmakers from Mississippi, Senator Thad Cochran, Senator Roger Wicker and Congressman Steven Palazzo.

The Mississippi lawmakers, in communications with the ITC, have argued that the antidumping duties initially imposed in 2005 need to be continued to protect the Gulf Coast shrimp industry.

The Gulf Coast shrimp industry has been beset by a series of disasters, including hurricanes, the economic recession and the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

“The decision to continue antidumping orders on foreign shrimp is a significant victory not only for the Mississippi shrimping industry but also for American consumers,” said Mr Roger Wicker.

Mr Steven Palazzo said: “Our shrimp industry is an example of the resilience and determination expressed by all Mississippians in the wake of the BP oil spill.

Today’s decision means that our shrimpers can continue to recover unimpeded, resulting in more jobs and a stronger economy in Mississippi.”

Shrimp production in Mississippi totalled about 10 million pounds in 2009, a 26 percent increase when compared to 7.8 million pounds in 2005.

The 2009 season was valued at almost \$13 million, and the industry had an estimated \$115 million economic impact on the state.

Mr Cochran and Mr Wicker had appeared at an ITC hearing on February 1 to testify that the duties have been effective in fostering price stability and industry investment.

Mr Palazzo was one of four members of the House of Representatives who wrote to the ITC in late January to express their strong support for the continuation of the antidumping duty orders.

Apeda to use hoardings at IGI to promote basmati



New Delhi, March 16:

To promote the Indian basmati rice brand, the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority has invited bids for installation of advertising hoardings at Terminal 3 of Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport, which is the sixth largest in the world.

“This location (Terminal 3 of IGI airport) should attract maximum attention of the relevant audience to help further build Indian basmati rice as a brand,” the Apeda said on its website.

Technical and financial bids are invited separately for the positioning of well-designed Indian basmati rice hoarding at a strategic location at Terminal 3 of IGI airport, it said, adding that the period of display will be for one year from May 16, 2011.

Appreciating the Apeda’s initiative, the All India Rice Exporters’ Association President, Mr Vijay Sethia, said: “This is for the first time, Apeda is promoting basmati rice brand through hoardings at Delhi’s airport.”

Normally, Apeda promotes Indian farm products via trade fairs and conferences in the international market, he said, adding that the novel initiative of setting up hoardings of basmati rice at airport would add value to the product.

After seeing the results at IGI, the export promotion body should initiate similar steps to promote Indian basmati rice at other select airports in the country, he suggested.

At Jeddah, Saudi Arabia's busiest airport, Saudi dates are promoted via hoardings and even sold at shops, he added. According to the crop survey conducted by Apeda, total basmati rice production is estimated at 7 million tonnes in the 2010-11 crop year, almost 10 per cent higher than 6.4 mt recorded in the previous year. In the 2009-10 fiscal, the country shipped 2.01 mt basmati rice mainly to the UAE, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Europe and the US.