

THE HINDU

Online edition of India's National Newspaper

Tuesday, May 03, 2011

Date:03/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/03/stories/2011050353600300.htm>

Paddy growers to form association

'The government should announce MSP of Rs.2,000 per quintal to bail out farmers'

Paddy growers are receiving stepmotherly treatment from the Centre: BKS Millers are making a profit of Rs. 485 to Rs. 585 per quintal, says sangh

VIJAYAWADA: The paddy growers from various States have decided to form an association to lobby with the governments to resolve their problems.

Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS) organised a meeting here on Monday to discuss the problems being faced by the paddy growers across the country. Farmers from West Bengal, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Gujarat and other states attended the meeting.

The BKS all-India vice president V. Raghava Reddy said that the paddy growers were receiving step-motherly treatment from the Centre and State governments. While the wheat farmers were receiving incentives, subsidies, bonus and all possible help from the governments, the paddy farmers were grossly neglected, they opined. Leave alone remunerative prices, the paddy farmers were not getting even Minimum Supportive Price (MSP), the meeting resolved. They were incurring a loss of Rs. 1,200 per quintal. On the other hand, the millers were making a profit of Rs.485 to Rs. 585 per quintal due to the lopsided policies pursued by the governments, said Raghava Reddy. The government should announce MSP of Rs.2,000 per quintal to bail out the farmers from losses.

The paddy farmers do not receive subsidised seeds, manure and fertilisers.

A farmer incurs an expenditure of Rs. 40,000 per acre to grow paddy, and production cost of each bag was Rs. 1,639.

'Hardly enough'

However, the farmer was not getting even Rs. 885 per bag, notwithstanding tall claims of the government that remunerative prices would be ensured. And, the proposed Paddy Growers Association would take up these issues with the governments concerned.

The Association would take up agitations in a phased manner to resolve the paddy growers' problems, he added. The BKS all India Secretary Mohini Mohana Misra, State secretary J. Kumara Swamy and others spoke.

Date:03/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/03/stories/2011050352430300.htm>

Don't resort to distress sale of paddy, farmers told

WARANGAL: Farmers in the district were urged not to resort to distress sale of paddy as the district administration has made enough arrangements for procurement.

Speaking to newsmen here on Monday, Joint Collector V. Karuna asked the farmers to be patient and not to fall prey to the middlemen. Allaying fears that there was not enough space to store the paddy, she said enough space to store 2 lakh metric tonnes of paddy was made available and more space would be made available in phased manner.

According to here, the paddy production in the district is expected to be around 6.6 lakh metric tonnes from 1.5 lakh hectares of land. The Food Corporation of India (FCI) had opened five procurement centres one each at Jangaon, Kesamudram, Mahububabad, Govindaraopet and Khanapur besides, the Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) groups were procuring paddy at 95 centres in the district.

Condemning the rumours that farmers were not getting reasonable price, Ms. Karuna said a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs. 1,030 is being given and for second grade quality, Rs. 1,000 is being paid per quintal of paddy in the district. She urged the farmers to bring to the notice of Civil Supplies and Revenue officials if any trader tries to exploit them.

The Joint Collector said since paddy harvesting is being done by the machines, paddy was found to be having more moisture which does not command good price.

Date:03/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/03/stories/2011050363240300.htm>

Sowing seeds of an industrial economy

Bageshree S.

Tipu took keen interest in building a network of commercial links and a fleet of ships

He showed interest in technology related to printing, watch-making and chinaware

Bangalore: Tipu Sultan may have been the bitterest rival of the colonial powers, but he constantly tried to build a modern system of industry and commerce, often welcoming new technology from foreign shores.

Renowned historian Irfan Habib notes that Tipu's efforts to build an empire on the strong foundation of manufacturing industry and commerce “distinguished him from all contemporary Indian potentates”. As the next logical step, Tipu took a keen interest in building a network of commercial links and a fleet of ships for trade.

Apart from constantly improvising technology related to weaponry, Tipu showed keen interest in technology related to printing, watch-making and chinaware. He set up units for the latter two in his territory with help from French craftsmen.

Citing one of Tipu's hukumnamas, Dr. Habib points out in his introduction to the book, "Resistance and Modernisation under Haider Ali and Tipu Sultan", that he had set up workshops for making scissors, needles and cutlery.

Trading company

In a move that was radically ahead of his times, Tipu set up a commercial corporation with nine members in 1793 that was to integrate manufacture and finance. It had a mandate to establish factories, oversee trade and keep accounts. Thirty factories in all were to be established in Tipu's territory, including two in Bangalore, under the corporation.

Money for these enterprises was to come from the treasury with an investment of four lakh rahatis (equivalent to Rs. 12 lakh).

The officials of the corporation were to raise capital by inviting deposits from the public.

A particularly interesting part of the project was that the interest rates were to vary in accordance with the size of the capital, smaller depositors getting higher rates, in a bid to attract smaller investors.

William Kirkpatrick, an official of the East India Company, who translated some of the letters of Tipu, pays a reluctant complement to the Mysore ruler's vision: "It may, indeed, be reasonably doubted, whether either resources of his country, or his genius, were equal to the realisation of so bold a plan, but it is as well perhaps, that he was not allowed time for the experiment." Iftikhar A. Khan from Aligarh Muslim University, in his essay titled "The regulations of Tipu Sultan for His State Trading Enterprise", says that these endeavours of Tipu to build up a "public sector company", as these regulations envisage, set him far above other contemporary Indian rulers.

Date:03/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/03/stories/2011050364400900.htm>

Huge demand for cotton seeds in Mysore district

There is not enough supply of the brand preferred by farmers

MYSORE: A preference for long-staple variety of cotton among farmers has brought pressure upon authorities hard-pressed to meet the demand from cultivators in the district.

Although the district administration has allayed fears of scarcity of Bt cotton seeds, farmers are unconvinced. The demand is more than the supply for the long-staple variety, but there is adequate supply of seeds for medium- and short-staple varieties, according to authorities who arranged for seed distribution at all taluk centres in the district on Monday.

Joint Director of Agriculture K.R. Krishnaiah told The Hindu that farmers traditionally cultivated the long-staple variety and hence were reluctant to opt for other varieties. There were long queues outside shops adjoining Jaganmohan Palace on Monday. Many farmers pitched tent here on Sunday night to beat the morning rush.

Notwithstanding the assurance by authorities that the branded seeds on sale through licensed distributors were certified by agricultural experts, the farmers sought a particular brand.

There has also been a tremendous demand for Bt cotton following a surge in procurement price of cotton, which was being quoted up to Rs. 7,000 a quintal. Meanwhile, the authorities increased security near the distribution centres to prevent any untoward incidents. Senior police officers visited the spot and traffic was curtailed till distribution was completed.

The authorities said Mysore district required nearly 1.31 lakh packets of Bt cotton seeds as the area under cotton cultivation was projected to increase from 40,000 hectares last year to 54,000 hectares this year.

Many tobacco cultivators too have shifted to cotton cultivation in H.D. Kote due to high procurement price, which has further fuelled demand.

H.D. Kote and Nanjangud are principal cotton-growing areas in Mysore district, and together account for almost 80 per cent of the crop grown in the region.

Senior officials in the Department of Agriculture said the demand for seeds would be completely met in the next couple of days.

Nearly 43,000 packets of seeds were distributed in the last two days and the authorities had 33,000 more packets in stock.

Pen culture of fish farming catches on

Jabir Mushthari

Fish are held captive in an enclosed space in rivers or lakes while maintaining a free exchange of water.

Kozhikode: The Fisheries Department has initiated a process to identify more farmers to expand the 'pen culture' mode of fish farming in the district. This mode of fish farming was successfully experimented at Thalakkulathur panchayat last year.

Deputy Director of Fisheries K.K. Satheesh Kumar on Monday distributed 2,500 fingerlings of 'karimeen' (pearl spot) to two pen culture units at Nambiattinpuram under Atholi panchayat in Kozhikode. The pen culture form of fish farming is a method of growing fish holding them captive within an enclosed space in rivers or lakes whilst maintaining a free exchange of water.

Units identified

M.K. Gopinathan, aquaculture coordinator of Matsya Keralam in Atholi panchayat, said six pen culture units had been identified in Atholi panchayat along the Korappuzha by the department for financial assistance and technical support. The project was being implemented under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), sponsored by the Central and State governments.

Lease

As per the scheme, an equivalent of 65 cents of land in a river would be given on lease to a group of at least three farmers (certified by the authorities based on certain criteria). The area would be enclosed using bamboo sticks, rods and mesh or netting. Fingerlings would be distributed by the department besides providing training and other technical support.

Price factor

“The lease will have to be renewed every year by the members of the unit,” said Mr. Gopinathan, who added that the pen culture farming would help increase in a big way the availability of quality fish at a reduced market price. “The fish will be ready for harvest in four months,” said Mr. Gopinathan. He said a subsidy of Rs.95,000 would be given to each unit. The department had identified 25 pen culture units in the district to be given the subsidy and other support.

Effective

“We are looking forward to more farmers entering this form of fish farming, which has been found highly cost-effective and successful in the region,” said Mr. Gopinathan.

Date:03/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/03/stories/2011050355190500.htm>

Farmers upset over decline in price of turmeric

S. Ramesh

PHOTO: M.GOVARTHAN



weakening demand:Workers harvesting turmeric at Savadipalayam, near Erode.

ERODE: The downtrend in the yellow spice prices in Erode market continues due to the weakening demand and steady arrivals. The prices fell below Rs. 9,000 per quintal at the end of

the last week. The prices dropped by Rs. 300 to Rs.400 a quintal during the trade on Monday alone.

The daily arrivals in Erode market hovers between 10,000 and 15,000 bags. But the demand for turmeric in the domestic and export markets has gone down, which led to the drop in the prices. "We expect the prices to further drop by another Rs. 300 during this week. The prices now hover between Rs. 8,800 and Rs. 9,000 a quintal," Erode Turmeric Merchants Association president R KV Ravishankar said.

The decline in the prices has upset the turmeric farming community in the district, which has hoped that the yellow spice will bring in better fortune this year too. Last year, the prices had crossed Rs. 16,000 a quintal, making many turmeric farmers in Erode district richer. The bullish market had encouraged the farmers to double the acreage under turmeric cultivation in the district. Over 10,000 hectares have been brought under the crop during the last year.

There was a strong expectation among the farmers that the prices of the yellow spice would not go below Rs. 9,000 a quintal. "But we see the prices continue to decline during the last two weeks. If this trend continues, we may not be able to get remunerative prices for our produce," turmeric farmers fear.

As a result, many farmers in the district are planning to keep their produce in stock and sell it when the prices go up once again.

Date:03/05/2011 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2011/05/03/stories/2011050355380500.htm>

Tobacco farmers a worried lot

Continuation of auctions in Karnataka has its impact on State

Prices are not encouraging in the State Auctions in Karnataka to end in a week

GUNTUR: Tobacco farmers in Andhra Pradesh are peeved at the continuing auctions of unauthorised crop in Karnataka whereas their production has almost hit a plateau at about 170 million kilos just below the authorised crop size (in Andhra Pradesh) of 174 million kilos.

The auctions in Andhra Pradesh are going on at a tardy pace this season with only 20 million kilos acquired till date largely due to low-key participation of traders in the auctions here.

The farmers are also worried that the prices are not encouraging in spite of the fact that there is no excess crop in the State.

Tobacco auctions in Karnataka are still going on affecting the traders' participation in Andhra Pradesh. Farmers of Karnataka have produced 130 million kilos as against the authorised crop size of 100 million kilos.

Excess crop

The excess crop is what is being auctioned now in Karnataka while farmers back home are virtually searching for buyers to lift their legitimate crop. This is the crux of the problem faced by farmers in Andhra Pradesh, who are bearing the brunt of the delay in auctions.

Tobacco Board chairman G. Kamala Vardhana Rao has told The Hindu that auctions in Karnataka will draw to a close in about a week and auctions in Andhra Pradesh will gain momentum.

The board is taking necessary steps to help tobacco farmers in both States and expected traders to respond positively to the situation. Penalties are being imposed on those producing more than the authorised crop size.

The demand for suspension of auctions in Karnataka is unreasonable as the farmers there are also dependent on the prospective returns on their investment.

There is a drop in production in Andhra Pradesh and the agitation in Prakasam district has a telling impact on auctions, according to him.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 84%

Wind: Normal

Tuesday, May 3

Max Min

38.6° | 26.6°

Sunrise: 5:48

Sunset: 18:24

Barometer: 1005.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, May 4

Max Min

36° | 26°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday

May 5



39° | 29°

Rainy

Friday

May 6



40° | 29°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

May 7



40° | 28°

Cloudy

Sunday

May 8



40° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

Monday

May 9



40° | 28°

Partly Cloudy

2 May, 2011, 11.58AM IST,PTI

Potato futures down on adequate supply

NEW DELHI: Potato prices weakened by Rs 1.90 to Rs 599 per quintal in futures trade today on adequate stocks position against subdued demand.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange , potato for delivery in May declined by Rs 1.90, or 0.32 per cent to Rs 599 per quintal, with a business turnover of four lots.

The potato for delivery in June also traded lower by 80 paise, or 0.15 per cent to 543 per quintal, with a business volume of a single lot.

Market analysts said adequate stocks position following increased arrivals from producing regions against subdued demand, led to the decline in potato futures prices.

2 May, 2011, 11.55AM IST,PTI

Cardamom futures fall 1.42 pc on profit-taking

NEW DELHI: Cardamom prices fell by Rs 14.40 to Rs 1,001 per kg in futures trading today as speculators booked profits on the back of a weakening trend at spot market due to sluggish demand.

Adequate stocks position in the physical market following increased arrivals from producing belts also put pressure on cardamom futures prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange , cardamom for delivery in June fell by Rs 14.40, or 1.42 per cent to Rs 1,001 per kg, with a business turnover of two lots.

Likewise, the spice for delivery in May lost Rs 7.40, or 0.75 per cent to Rs 981.20 per kg, with an open interest of two lots.

Market analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators at existing higher levels, subdued demand in the spot market mainly led to the fall in cardamom prices at futures trade here.

THE HINDU Business Line

Good rains, increased arrivals pull down cardamom prices



Kochi, May 2:

Last week, cardamom prices fell sharply at auctions held in Kerala and Tamil Nadu on bearish sentiments created by good rains and increased arrivals amid slack demand.

The rise in arrivals at the auctions last week gave the impression that the growers were holding huge stocks and, as a result, the buyers had slowed down buying. In addition, the continuous rains the week before last in the growing areas has led the market to believe that the next crop would be good and early. And this has strengthened the bearish sentiments.

Increased arrivals

“The upsurge in arrivals now when the harvesting has already come to an end at all the auctions held last week has created the impression that the growers and primary market dealers are holding huge stocks which they are liquidating now following good rains in the growing areas”, trade sources said.

These sentiments have compelled buyers to slow down their purchases and that has, in turn, led to a decline in the prices.

Total arrivals during last week were at around 295 tonnes. These are much more than the normal for this time of the season, they said.

Arrivals at the Sunday auction conducted by KCPMC were at 46 tonnes, and almost the entire quantity was sold out.

The maximum price fetched was Rs1,056 a kg and the minimum Rs 416.50, Mr P. C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC told *Business Line*. He said exporters also slowed down their purchases anticipating the prices would decline further. Total quantity bought was estimated at around 10 tonnes last week.

Total arrivals during the current season (from August 1 to May 1, 2011) stood at 9,351 tonnes. Of this, 9,120 tonnes were sold.

Arrivals and sales in the same period of the previous season were 9,040 tonnes and 8,825 tonnes respectively.

Weighted average price as on May 1, was Rs1,082 per kg, up from Rs 823 per kg same day last year.

Individual auction average price dropped to below Rs 900 a kg and vacillated between Rs 810 and Rs 880 a kg from midweek last.

Prices per kg for graded varieties in Kumily on Monday were: AGEB, Rs 1,060-1,070; AGB, Rs 1,000-1,025; AGS, Rs 920-930; and AGS1, Rs 880-910. According to trade sources, the prices per kg in the open market in Bodinayakannur were: AGEB (7-8 mm), Rs 1,030; AGB (6-7 mm), Rs 900-950; AGS (5-6 mm), Rs 875; and AGS 1, Rs 850.

Inferior quality

Good colour 8mm bold capsules were not available in the market and the arrivals at present are of inferior quality and, hence, fetching low prices, trade sources in Bodi told *Business Line*. Good bulk was being sold at Rs 920 a kg, they said.

All the cardamom growing tracts in Idukki district received good rains in the week before last. However, last week there were no rains. Overall weather conditions remained suitable for the plants and hence the next crop might be good and likely to come early, growers said.

Cashew kernel may see periodic dips and spikes



Kochi, May 2:

The cashew kernel market witnessed some business last week in a wide price range depending on processors, but amid limited activities.

Business was done for W240 from \$4.30 to \$4.40; W320 from \$3.80 to \$3.95; SW from \$3.60 to \$3.75; Splits from \$3.30 to \$3.40; Pieces from \$3.20 to \$3.25 (fob). Most of the business was for nearbys as there was fair interest for third quarter shipments at the lower end of the range but the processors from whom the buyers want to buy forwards are not willing to discount market to get forward orders.

Raw Cashew Nuts (RCN) were also being offered and traded in a wide range, depending on quality and terms. Price ranges were Ivory Coast (IVC)-Ghana from \$1,275 to \$1,375 a tonne (c&f), Benin from \$1,325 to \$1,400 a tonne (c&f), Senegal-Gambia from \$1,450 to \$1,500, Guinea Bissau from \$1,500 to \$1,600 a tonne (c&f).

Price range and fluctuations are wider than normal and this is likely to lead to more problems than usual, trade sources in Mumbai said.

Movements from all origins are expected to pick up in May and bulk of West Africa RCN will arrive in India and Vietnam from mid June to October (i.e., about 2-3 months later and spread over a longer period than normal). As discussed earlier, this delay will mean lower kernel yields, they said.

It seems that for the next 3-4 months, the kernel market will continue to see periodic dips and spikes in activity and prices — but the price movement is expected to be in the current range. Quiet period may bring out lower offers from some processors but the underlying buying interest, as most buyers are operating on short term covers, “will provide support to the market. Also, the strong Euro + GBP + AUD and some other currencies (vs the USD) mean that current kernel prices are close to the mid 2010 levels for these markets,” Mr Pankaj N. Sampat, a Mumbai-based dealer, told *Business Line*.

Reduced processing in March-June will mean that thin kernel pipeline will continue till July or maybe even August and this will keep prices in the current range unless there is a long quiet period in May-June. This seems unlikely since the pattern of short-term buying means that some buyers will always need to buy — even though quantities they cover at any given time

may be limited. If there is a big drop in retail off-take in the US and EU in first half, buyers may be able to delay (or reduce) their buying for later deliveries as existing cover may last longer.

Good Asian demand from mid or late May for Indian marriage season followed by festivals and Ramadan in West Asia-North Africa, will mean there will be regular buying for spot and nearbys, he said.

Overall, the trade feels that if the RCN prices do not come down significantly in May-June, there are very little chances of any big decline in kernel prices for 2011 shipments. If the RCN prices do not come down, any dip in kernel price below the current range should be a buying opportunity to cover a larger portion of 2011 needs, he added.

Pistachio declines on sluggish demand



New Delhi, May 2:

Pistachio prices declined by Rs 5 a kg in the national capital on Monday owing to sluggish demand from retailers and stockists.

Adequate stocks position following increased arrivals from overseas markets also put pressure on pistachio prices.

Pistachio hairati and peshawari fell by Rs 5 to settle at Rs 995-1,045 and Rs 1,220-1,270 a kg, respectively. Traders said subdued demand from retailers and stockists weighed on the pistachio prices.

Following are today's quotations in Rs for 40 kg: Almond (California) Rs 9,600 Almond (gurbandi-new) Rs 5,000-5,300 almond (girdhi) Rs 2,700-2,900 and Abjosh Afghani Rs 7,000-20,000.

Almond kernel a kg: (California) Rs 330-340, almond kernel (gurbandi-new) Rs 320-390.

Karnataka tobacco growers seek parity with AP farmers on output quota



Bangalore, May 2:

Karnataka tobacco growers have sought 'kg per barn' parity in quota with Andhra Pradesh growers.

The Federation of Karnataka Tobacco Growers Association submitted a memorandum to this effect to Mr Bykere Nagesh, special representative of Karnataka Government at New Delhi, who is touring the tobacco growing regions in the State.

The Federation said, "In spite of Karnataka tobacco growers harvesting higher yield per hectare, Andhra Pradesh farmers are allowed to grow 2,150 kg per barn while the farmers in Karnataka are authorised to grow only 1,740 kg per barn, which is 410 kg less per barn."

With the continuous increase in crop size, the infrastructure for conducting auctions in Karnataka needs to be revamped to meet the requirement on increased crop.

"These auction floors, which are built to auction 60 million kg of tobacco, are currently selling more than 120 million kg and causing lot of hardships to the growers, in terms of undue delays for getting their turn to market their produce," said Mr B.V. Javare Gowda, President of the Federation of Karnataka Tobacco Growers Association.

"Currently farmers are getting a turn to sell his produce once in 20 to 25 days and the infrastructure should be improved to ensure every farmer gets a turn to sell his produce once in seven days," he added.

As for the introduction of E-auctions, majority of the farmers in Karnataka are very small and they are often exploited by members of the trade and a few Tobacco Board officials as well.

"Fast tracking the introduction of E-auctions, which has proved to be beneficial to the farmers, will bring in full transparency in the auction system and help in better price discovery to the farmers," said Mr Gowda.

FDI in tobacco

Though the Karnataka (Mysore) crop is predominantly exported, it is the domestic manufacturers who have always stood by the tobacco farming community during difficult times.

"The outsiders have always been business minded and have exploited the farmers by being opportunists. Hence, we strongly object the entry of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into tobacco industry," explained Mr Gowda.

Regarding taxation, the association felt growers were in a desperate situation because the demand for domestic cigarette tobaccos, which is produced, is rapidly going down in favour of cheaper alternative tobacco.

“This is because of the discriminatory taxation policies followed by the Government. As you are aware, cigarette tobaccos only form a small portion (15 per cent) of the total tobacco consumption in the country, but contributes to most (nearly 80 per cent) of the revenues generated by all tobaccos for the Government.

“The punitive taxation on cigarettes as well as exemption on other cheaper products is resulting in a shift in demand and stagnation in domestic cigarette industry leading to steep decline in the requirements of the domestic cigarette manufacturers.

“The wide differences in tax rates between cigarettes and other tobacco products should be reduced to protect the cigarette tobacco-growing farmer's interest,” said Mr T. Vikram Raje Urs, Secretary, The Federation of Karnataka Tobacco Growers Association.

Rubber Board's spends on labour welfare

Kottayam, May 2:

The Rubber Board distributed Rs 2.66 crore for labour welfare in 2010-11, according to a press release at Kottayam. The scheme benefitted 14,561 labourers in the organised and unorganised sectors.

It included medical attendance, housing subsidy and group insurance cum deposit for labourers and educational stipend and merit award for their children.

It was intended for the improvement of basic amenities and working conditions of the rubber plantation workers.

The amount spent for various components are Rs 72,72,890 (educational stipend and merit award), Rs 1,50,87,500 (housing subsidy) and Rs 1,50,2,730 (group insurance cum deposit. Rs. 1,38,1000 was also paid for 284 beneficiaries under sanitary subsidy component.

South China Sea cyclone may launch monsoon into Bay

Thiruvananthapuram, May 2:

Global models indicate the possibility of a South China Sea cyclone helping launch the southwest monsoon into the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, its first port of call in the Indian territorial waters, around the normal date.

This is even as India Meteorological Department (IMD) has been keeping a watch for the first pre-monsoon low-pressure area to spring up in the Bay of Bengal. But a core of strong westerlies already blowing across the plains and into the Bay of Bengal may put paid to these hopes.

A fresh western disturbance is expected to check into western Himalayas and northwest India by Thursday and opposing flows from this may snuff out any chance of revival of full-fledged 'low' in the Bay.

A weak circulation would likely be all that is left of the current churn in the Bay, which would be made to retreat east-northeast towards the Myanmar coast.

The IMD has withdrawn its watch for the "low" effective from the afternoon bulletin on Monday. It is in this backdrop that the forecast about the likely formation of a cyclone in the South China Sea by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) assumes significance.

The "wet season" has already unfolded over Southeast Asia from Sunday (May 1), regional met agencies confirmed.

This is the usual date for the onset here and the winds would turn southwesterly as a "low" originating in the west Pacific crosses the Philippines and drifts into adjoining South China Sea.

The ECMWF expects this system to drop anchor here, and grow in strength to become a tropical cyclone by May 12, up to which its guidance is available. The US National Centres for Environmental Prediction expects this system to hurl a potent circulation into the Andaman Sea, or extreme southeast Bay of Bengal, during the week that follows.

This could also bring the southwest monsoon into Andaman and Nicobar region around the normal time for onset (May 15 to 20). It will take another fortnight for the Arabian Sea arm of the monsoon to make a splash over the Kerala coast.

Why should the world eat more pulses? Here's why



Barcelona, May 2:

Pulses, especially lentils, provide advantages in health, nutrition and environment, according to researchers. Lentils are a nutrient-dense food with many health benefits such as high levels of protein, iron, magnesium and zinc, while being low in fat and no cholesterol.

Additionally, they are high in folate, dietary fibre and antioxidants, representatives of Canadian and the US pea and lentil promotion organisations told delegates at the International Pulses Industry and Trade Confederation convention here on Monday.

Eco-friendly

Interestingly, lentils are environment-friendly compared to other foods in energy and water usage. Among a wide range of food products, energy intensity of pulses is the lowest. At the same time, in terms of water footprint too, pulses rank the lowest.

While 43 gallons of water are required to produce one pound of pulses, water usage is higher in case of soybean (216 gallons) and peanuts (368 gallons) progressively rising to 1,857 gallons to produce one pound of beef.

The world is now discovering the benefits of growing and consuming pulses, something that agrarian economies such as India have been doing for several decades. Pulses are a dry-land crop and, no wonder, they use much less water than many other crops. By their very nature, many legumes, especially pulses, use less water and help fix nitrogen in soil.

Crop rotation

Using legumes for crop rotation to enhance soil health and reduce nitrogen application is a well accepted and widely adopted agronomic practice. As for energy footprint, the West uses too much of synthetic fertilisers that are produced out of fossil energy (crude), and these products are of recent origin.

Now, producing countries such as the US and Canada that are large suppliers of various pulses (pea and lentil) to many importing countries such as India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh and so on are seeking to promote pulses export using the health, nutrition and environment platform.

The marketing initiative on health and environment grounds may be successful in some markets, but not in all, some of the participants at the convention told this correspondent.

Outlook for 2011

Weather aberrations can mar the prospects for production of pulses in major producing regions, experts assert. Growing regions in the US and Canada are reeling under floods cause by melting snow. Obviously, planting is going to be delayed and so will the harvest. There are concerns of dry conditions in Australia.

Will the world have enough pulses in the coming months? This is the big question everyone is asking. India may of course be the wild card. If expanded acreages of 2010 (26 million hectares) are repeated in 2011, and the southwest monsoon turns friendly, the world will be relieved of huge price pressure.

Tobacco auctions in AP slow on excess Karnataka crop



Guntur, May 2:

Tobacco auctions in Andhra Pradesh are proceeding at a snail's pace this season, with only 20 million kg sold on the floors till date at an average price of Rs 116.21 a kg, worrying farmers of the State. This is despite farmers sticking to the authorised crop size this season. Against the authorised crop size of 174 million kg, the actual production in the State may be lower than 170 million kg. Heavy rains damaged the crop in many districts and hit production. However, fortunately, the quality of leaf was not affected, and the production of bright grades is more than usual.

Karnataka auctions

The auctions in Karnataka are still going on, and this is said to be one of the major factors responsible for the poor trade participation on the Andhra Pradesh floors till now. In Karnataka,

till date 120 million kg has been sold at an average price of Rs 93.70 a kg. Here, against the authorised crop size of 100 million kg the farmers have grown 130 million kg. The unauthorised, or surplus, crop of 30 million kg is being auctioned in that State now. The farmers in Andhra Pradesh are aggrieved that even though they have not grown surplus this season, they are being penalised as auctions are being delayed in the State as the trade is busy buying the unauthorised crop in Karnataka.

Mr G. Kamala Vardhana Rao, the Chairman of the Tobacco Board, said here on Monday that the auctions in Karnataka would come to a close in a week or so and the trade participation in AP would improve certainly. "It is a fact that auctions in AP have been slow till now, but the trade will shift to AP soon, as the Karnataka auctions will come to a close and things will improve," he said and added that the Board was making all efforts to secure a remunerative price for the farmers on the floors. The farmers in Prakasam district agitated for a better price and there was disruption of auctions for ten days or so. "The Board intervened and persuaded the trade to hike the price by Rs 4 per kg. We are urging the trade to stand by the farmer this season, as AP farmers have lost heavily due to torrential rains," he said.

He felt that the demand to suspend the auction of unauthorised crop in Karnataka and take up auction of authorised crop in Andhra Pradesh was not a tenable one. "We are always encouraging and persuading farmers in Karnataka or Andhra Pradesh to stick to the prescribed crop size to get a better price on the floor. If they exceed the crop size, we are levying punitive cess. We are levying such cess in Karnataka this season," he explained.

He said the Board would take all steps to help tobacco farmers in both the States, but the trade should also respond positively to the situation.

"There is an increase in global tobacco production this season, and therefore the prospects for Indian tobacco may not be as rosy as they were during the past two seasons. There has been a substantial hike in production in Brazil and Zimbabwe. But the trade should support the farmer in times of distress," he opined.

'Draw up R&D action plan for new strains of coffee seeds'



Bangalore, May 2:

The Karnataka Planters' Association (KPA) has urged the Commerce Ministry to initiate a research in developing high yielding and drought-tolerant arabica and robusta strains in the 12th Five-Year Plan.

KPA made this suggestion at a consultation workshop organised by the ministry recently. The KPA Chairman, Mr Sahadev Balakrishna, said an R & D action plan by the Central Coffee Research Institute should be undertaken.

“The new strains should be resistant to leaf rust and be effective in controlling the White Stem Borer as well. It is a good chance for sustained arabica production in India and an effective pest control measure is imperative to prevent the conversion of arabica estates into robusta,” he said.

“With severe constraints on water resources, the development of drought-resistant varieties of robusta will mitigate the dependency on irrigation,” said Mr Balakrishna.

Ecological harmony

The Ministry should also give importance to ecological harmony and for maintaining biodiversity.

“The contribution of the plantation sector to the economy coupled with the contribution of plantations in maintaining the ecological harmony has been well documented by many international and domestic organisations and experts. We need to have a benefit wherein the maintenance of shade trees and the preservation of water bodies are rewarded similar to the carbon trading benefits accruing to certain industries,” said Mr Marvin Rodrigues, Vice-Chairman for KPA.

Regarding availability of fertilisers, Mr Rodrigues said the policy of the Union Government in switching over of subsidy payable from type of fertiliser to nutrient-based fertilisers has resulted in acute short supply of urea and also DAP, MOP fertilisers.

Indigenous manufactured machines for different field operations should be developed on a war footing. With low technology and innovative ideas many of the field operations could be mechanised locally, explained Mr Rodrigues.