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Training in ornamental fish rearing

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) has organised a one-day free training programme on “ornamental fish rearing” on its premises from 9 a.m. on Thursday.

Participants will be trained in different types of ornamental fish, feed, pond/tank and water management, breeding and revenue generation by rearing ornamental fish. Interested persons should enrol at the KVK before 5 p.m. on Wednesday, either in person or over phone at 04286-266345, 266244 or 266650.

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'Krishi Jalakam' to showcase farm technologies

Exhibition to be held at IISR, Chelavoor, from Thursday

The Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR) here is organising an agricultural technology exhibition on its campus at Chelavoor from February 16 to 18.

The event, Krishi Jalakam 2012, will showcase various agricultural technologies developed by various centres of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and the State agricultural universities for the benefit of the farming community, according to a release here on Monday.

More than 20 research institutes and governmental organisations, including the Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI), Kasaragod; Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI), Thiruvananthapuram; Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Kochi; Indian Institute of Spices Research (IISR), Kozhikode; Krishi Vijnan Kendra, Peruvannamuzhi; Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (CIFT), Kochi; Directorate of Areca nut and Spices Development (DASD), Kozhikode; Centre for Water Resources Development and Management (CWRDM), Kozhikode; National Research Centre for Banana, Trichy; National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF); Milma,

Kunnamangalam; Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council, Keralam (VFPCK); and the National Seeds Corporation, Palakkad, will put up stalls to exhibit various technologies and machineries developed by them.

Minister for Agriculture and Animal Husbandry K.P Mohanan will inaugurate the event at 10 a.m. on Thursday.

M.K. Raghavan, MP, will preside over the function. G. Sparjan Kumar, District Police Commissioner, and M. Tamil Selvan, Director, DASD, will be present.

The exhibition will be open to public and schoolchildren from 9.30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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Campaign against use of pesticides in cardamom estates

The Cardamom Research Station at Pampadumpara is taking measures to reduce the use of chemical pesticides in cardamom plantations and promote eco-friendly methods with a view to protecting the soil. Scientists have noticed that unscientific spraying of pesticides had resulted in low production and high level of plants decay, said Kuriakose K.P., head of the cardamom station.

The research station has developed bio-control measures to counter fungal diseases affecting the plants. Biological control of the fungus and insect attacks are done with bio-fungus, developed by it with the support of the State Horticulture Mission.

The bio-fungus found effective in controlling the attacks are Metarisium, a better control for the root grub affecting cardamom plants;

Beuveria, a genus of the asexually-reproducing fungi allied with the ascomycota family;
Verticillium, a genus of fungi in the category of

Ascomycota; and Dryoderma, an antidepresent fungi.

It has been noticed that diseases affecting the roots of the plants increase and the fungus can be controlled with bio-control measures, he said.

The research centre is conducting a campaign among cardamom farmers on the application of bio-control measures against chemical pesticide application. For details, contact phone 04868 236263.

Delay in paddy procurement condemned

Staff Correspondent



ROTTING:Paddy sacks that have piled up in open on APMC premises in Shimoga.— PHOTO: VAIDYA

Activists of Anna Hazare Horata Samiti staged a protest in the city on Monday condemning the delay in procurement of paddy.

Protesters said that more than 20,000 quintal of paddy brought by farmers to the procurement centre in the city has not been purchased yet.

The paddy sacks which were yet to be procured had been piled in open on the premises of Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee. Protesters apprehended that the paddy would be damaged in case of unseasonal rains due to which farmers would incur losses.

Officials of the Karnataka State Food and Civil Supplies Corporation who arrived at the spot said there was delay in the procurement process owing to shortage of storage place.

They said that the corporation was planning to stock the paddy procured in the district at the warehouse in Challakere.

No assessment

Protesters expressed displeasure that officials had failed to assess the flow of the produce to the procurement centre, and make necessary preparations accordingly.

Protesters demanded that the Government open additional procurement centre in Shimoga centre at the earliest.

Functionaries of the Samiti Mahohar Gowda, Syed Mazhar, and Manjuladevi took part in the protest.

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75 p.c. subsidy sought on seeds, fertilizers



ON A MISSION:Members of the Karnataka chapter of the Rashtriya Kisan Sangh taking out a rally in Chitradurga on Monday.

Members of the Karnataka chapter of the Rashtriya Kisan Sangh on Monday took out a rally and submitted a memorandum to the Government through Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal with various demands.

In the memorandum, they said that due to the failure of both kharif and rabi crops, farmers did not have money to purchase seeds and fertilizers for the next sowing and urged the Government to provide at least 75 per cent subsidy on seeds and fertilizers.

Stating that the price of toor had come down sharply, the protesters urged the Government to set up toor procurement centres.

The sangh demanded that the district administration take steps to get a branch of State Bank of India opened at Rampura and Bhimasamudra villages.

Alleging that work on the railway link project between Davangere and Tumkur, connecting Bangalore, was progressing at a snail's pace, the sangh urged the State Government to persuade the Union Government to speed it up.

Referring to the recent porn scandal involving three former Ministers, the sangh, besides condemning the incident, urged the BJP leadership to disqualify the three from the Assembly and book criminal cases against them.

State general secretary of the sangh Konche Shivarudrappa, State president of the women's wing Manjula Swamy and others took part.

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- *'Due to failure of kharif, rabi crops, farmers have no money to take up sowing for next season'*
 - *Government urged to open toor procurement centres and start buying the produce*
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Farmers grievances day meeting

The monthly farmers grievances day meeting will be held at 10.30 a.m. on February 17 at the Collectorate hall here. The District Collector, B.Maheswari, will preside over the meeting. A press release called upon the farmers and their representatives to participate in the meeting and get their grievances solved.

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Slight increase in egg price

Staff Reporter

The wholesale egg price that dropped to Rs. 2.35 from Rs. 3.20 during the first week of January has shown steady recovery. On Monday, the rate fixation committee of the National Egg Coordination Committee, (NECC) Namakkal Zone, increased its price to Rs. 2.63 from Rs. 2.53 on Sunday.

Its Chairman P. Selvaraj told *The Hindu* that steady increase in price was triggered by drop in egg production as temperatures as prevalent in the summer has already begun and due to increase in export. "Egg production increases during winter and drops in summer," he said. The secretary of the All India Poultry Products Exporters Association, Valsan Parameswaran, told *The Hindu* that consistent supply of quality eggs has coupled with the low price has boosted

egg export. "The reduction has, however, not opened new export markets but for increase in consumption at the regular markets", he added.

KALPETTA, February 14, 2012

Hike in subsidy for cattle feed likely

: Minister for Rural Development and Dairy Development K.C. Joseph said here on Monday that the Kerala government was considering a proposal to increase the subsidy rate for cattle feed to rejuvenate the dairy sector in the State.

Speaking after inaugurating a two-day district dairy farmers' meet and Milma fest, organised by the Dairy Development Department in association with the Kerala Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) and primary milk societies in the district, at the Holy Faith High School Auditorium at Makkiyad, near Mananthavadi, on Sunday, Mr. Joseph said many dairy farmers in the State were leaving the sector owing to heavy loss.

The present crisis of farmers in the sector should be solved to attain self-sufficiency in milk production in the State during the 12th Plan period, the Minister said. The Dairy Department and Animal Husbandry department would give all support to Milma in this regard, he said.

He said the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme should be implemented in the dairy, agriculture and coir sectors. Minister for Youth Affairs P.K. Jayalakshmi presided over the function.

CHENNAI, February 14, 2012

Cows provided by State contribute 20,000 litres of milk a day to Aavin

Officials consider establishment of proper follow-up system significant

Cows procured under the State Government-funded scheme are contributing 20,000 litres a day for the public milk distribution system administered by the Tamil Nadu Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation, popularly known as 'Aavin.'

Around 8,000 milch cows have been given to beneficiaries and the figure accounts for two-thirds of the 12,000 cross-bred Jersey cows to be distributed this year.

Chief Minister Jayalalithaa formally launched this scheme along with a number of other schemes at Tiruvallur in September on the occasion of birth anniversary of former Chief Minister C.N. Annadurai.

The scheme has an in-built feature to strengthen the public milk distribution system. The government order issued by the Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries Department in late July stated that District Collectors should ensure that Deputy Registrars (Dairy) take immediate action to form new Primary Milk Producers' Co-operative Societies with the beneficiaries of the scheme. Such societies, in turn, sell milk to the District Unions, which are constituents of 'Aavin.'

Compared to the total quantity of milk procurement [around 25 lakh litres a day] by the Unions, the share of the cows is modest but, what officials consider significant is that they have been able to establish a proper system of follow-up. Another feature of the scheme is that priority is given to those districts that are deficit in milk production. Under the sheep/goat distribution scheme, about 60,000 beneficiaries have been covered –around 2.5 lakh animals have been distributed. With four goats/sheep per beneficiary 40,000 more will benefit this year. Referring to reports of mortality of animals, an official says it is very negligible. Under both schemes, the animals are insured. At regular intervals, officials examine the animals and provide adequate veterinary services. As part of the follow-up procedures, veterinarians and para-veterinarians will visit, on Saturday, villages of the beneficiaries to administer de-worming dosage to the sheep/goats and foot and mouth vaccination to the cows.

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hindustantimes

Tue, 14 Feb 2012

weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Tuesday, Feb 14

Max Min

31.3° | 21.2°

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy






Wednesday, Feb 15

Max Min

32° | 23°

Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs **Sunrise:** 6:35
Humidity: 83% **Sunset:** 18:03
Wind: Normal **Barometer:** 1014

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Feb 16	Friday Feb 17	Saturday Feb 18	Sunday Feb 19	Monday Feb 20
				
28° 20° Cloudy	28° 21° Cloudy	28° 21° Cloudy	27° 19° Cloudy	28° 18° Cloudy



Food safety: soapy milk, toxic apples

Agencies Posted online: Mon Feb 13 2012, 12:02 hrs

New Delhi : Bhim can't understand what he's done wrong.

Before dawn every day he joins hundreds of wholesale traders at Delhi's Azadpur Mandi, a sprawling, chaotic market where trucks blare Bollywood music, porters haul huge brown sacks of fruit and vegetables and hawkers ply tea and cigarettes.

His own trade is in rosy red apples, laced with calcium carbide.

Bhim says he's been adding chemicals to his apples for years to artificially ripen them after a long journey from the Himalayan foothills, despite being told that it causes cancer.

As far as he knows, no-one has ever died from eating his produce. So he can't understand why the authorities are pestering him now, and why he has to pay so many bribes to keep his business afloat.

This is an age-old practice, trust me, I know. But suddenly doctors are claiming that it causes cancer. Come now, how is that possible? He said, wrapped up in a woollen grey cap and anorak on a chilly Saturday morning at the Azadpur Mandi market.

Everyone still does it. The only difference is that it's done very surreptitiously now. And let me tell you, it will never stop. Why would anyone want to harm their sales?

An interview with a senior food safety official starkly illustrates just how far India has to go to enforce the regulations properly.

Although the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has banned the use of calcium carbide as it is carcinogenic, the senior official said it is not harmful.

Unofficially, it happens everywhere, he said, speaking on condition of anonymity. How can the ripe fruit be brought from far away areas?

During the interview, the official also had to check with someone on the phone whether calcium carbide was legal or not.

Such attitudes explain why India still struggles to make its food fit for consumption. From rat poison found in vegetables and Diwali-festival sweets laced with caustic soda, to batches of moonshine liquor that kill scores of people at a time -- adulteration is rife.

A report by the FSSAI in January found that most of the country's milk was watered down or adulterated with products -- including fertiliser, bleach and detergent -- used to thicken the milk and help give it a white, frothy appearance.

The report caused an outcry in the world's largest milk producer, where the drink is used for religious rituals and is a source of protein for hundreds of millions of vegetarians.

But that is just the tip of the iceberg. The same agency has also found that 13 percent of all food in the world's second-most-populous country failed to meet its standards.

The problem is so widespread that everything is contaminated, said Savvy Soumya Misra of the New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE). If everything has problems, there is no choice but to eat whatever is available.

A FEW BAD APPLES

After two decades of rapid economic growth and rising living standards, millions of Indians have a richer and more varied diet than ever before. There is a growing appetite for everything from French wine to sushi among the swelling ranks of urban middle classes, products that simply weren't available to their parents' generation.

But safety standards have struggled to keep pace in a country that still has more poor than anywhere else in the world and where modern supermarkets remain relatively rare.

A world away from the swanky restaurants of New Delhi and Mumbai, awareness about safety only slowly trickles down to the country's millions of small-time vendors.

Poverty tempts sellers to add dilutants such as water to products to make them go further. Cheap cooking oil is mixed with expensive oil, tea waste is mixed with new tea, and anything from urea to blotting paper is added to thicken the food sold at festivals.

Poorly staffed regulatory authorities can struggle to cope. Given the scale of the problem, only a handful of people are prosecuted for flouting standards, let alone jailed, rights activists say.

In China, those people who were found to be contaminating milk with melamine, they were given something as severe as a death sentence, CSE's Misra said. But here, we're not even giving them any kind of punishment. So how are they supposed to get scared of the authorities?

In 2008 in China at least six children died and nearly 300,000 were made ill from drinking powdered milk laced with melamine, an industrial chemical used to give misleadingly high readings in protein tests. Two people were executed in 2009 for their role in the scandal.

QUICK BUCK

Food safety is often worse in poorer areas where ignorance and the temptation to make a quick buck are greater.

Poor people don't care much about the quality. Whatever is cheaper, they'll buy it, said Ashok Kanchan, technical adviser at Consumer VOICE, a rights group. They're just worried about how to fill their stomachs somehow.

Bhim, the apple seller, is a textbook example of what is going wrong.

Delhi's traders often source their produce from hundreds of kilometres away. In India, where highways are often potholed and jammed with traffic, and where storage facilities are primitive, up to 40 percent of perishable food rots before it can be sold.

Traders cannot buy fruit such as apples or mangoes when they are already ripe, because these would go to waste during the bumpy, un-refrigerated journey from the orchards. Instead, they buy the fruits and later ripen them with calcium carbide, a substance colloquially known as masala, or spice.

Using the white powder reduces a ripening process that normally takes weeks to a matter of hours.

Traders are also tempted to polish or dip fruit in artificial colours to make its appearance fresh for sale.

The ones that shine are the rotten ones, said Ramdular, who has sold in Delhi's Azadpur Mandi for decades. Looks good to the eyes, but ends up bad for the stomach.

Some traders at the market were willing to discuss such practices openly. Others only alluded to it in winks and nods.

He's taken your picture, so you're going to have to shut shop now! One trader shouts teasingly to another as a photographer clicked away among the fruit stalls.

GLASS HALF FULL?

Authorities in Delhi and elsewhere say they are cracking down on safety violations, from fining culprits to conducting surprise raids of food outlets. Raids are especially important during festivals, when bad batches of items such as sweetened milk or flour can send hundreds of people to hospital.

The Delhi government is already working towards tackling this situation and now that we've picked up this report, the government will take hastier steps to tackle the situation, A.K. Walia, the state's health minister, said about the FSSAI's report on milk adulteration.

But enforcing India's food safety laws is a tough task.

You can say that our laws are very good, but the implementation is very weak, said N.C. Basantia, director of the Delhi-based Avon Food Lab, which tests samples on behalf of government authorities.

Delhi, a city of 17 million people, has just 32 food safety officers and their job is all the harder because traders often see attempts to clamp down on bad practices as an attack on their livelihoods.

Whenever the department gets active, there is a hue and cry in the market, a second safety official said.

Even assessing the scale of India's food safety problem has been controversial. After the FSSAI published its survey on milk adulteration in January, state government after state government spoke out to deny the scale of the problem in their region.

On the other hand, Basantia of Avon Food Lab said the samples he tested for the government may flatter to deceive.

See, we can never be 100 percent sure about the food samples given to us, be it a private sector or a government study, because the samples aren't drawn by us, he said.

Obviously the officials will give a very good sample to us, we'll test it and report it to them, whereas the rest of the lot that they plan to export or plan to distribute is probably all contaminated. Despite all this, India's food safety record may actually be much better than it once was, largely because there is a growing awareness of the issue.

Indians are becoming more safety conscious thanks to higher literacy rates, clearer food packaging and a modernising retail sector. An explosion in 24-hour TV news channels in the past decade means coverage of safety scandals can run for days.

The FSSAI may have given a gloomy picture of India's food industry, but the organisation did not even exist before 2008, and is still in the process of upgrading laboratories with modern technology and training its staff.

India only has about 2,000 food safety officers -- compared with the 6,000 the FSSAI hopes to hire and train, according to its new chairman K. Chandramouli. Its budget for this fiscal year is just \$8 million, though it hopes to quadruple that in 2012/13.

Milk contamination is not a new thing. It's been happening for a very long period of time, the CSE's Misra said. Why it's created a furore now is because it's (the survey) been done by a food regulatory body.

The government has said that your milk is adulterated. Now it's set an official seal on all these things that we already knew, she said.



Wheat growers take guard against deadly yellow rust

MONDAY, 13 FEBRUARY 2012 22:37

RAJENDRA S MARKUNA | HALDWANI

Deteriorating weather conditions seem to have triggered serious concern among farmers with their rabi crop of wheat being highly prone to diseases such as yellow rust that strike during this period.

Though no case of yellow rust affecting rabi crops has been detected in Nainital district, some cases of the disease affecting crops have come to light in parts of Udham Singh Nagar district, officials said.

If yellow rust is detected, a mixture of 500 ml of propiconazole and 800-1,000 litres of water should be sprayed on one hectare of wheat crop, head of the plant pathology department of the GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, J Kumar, said.

Kumar added even if there are no symptoms of the disease, farmers may spray the medicine as a precautionary measure. Scientists of the plant pathology department of GBPUAT also conducted a field visit at Bazpur, Gadarpur, Dineshpur, Rudrapur, Kichha, Sitarganj and Khatima in the terai region of Udham Singh Nagar district on the request of local farmers. After studying the conditions on the ground, the scientists reached the conclusion that some of the varieties of wheat such as UP-2338, PBW-373, WH-147, PBW-343, PBW-502 and UP-262 have been affected. There are three kinds of rust - yellow rust, black rust and brown rust. Rabi crops such as wheat are most vulnerable to yellow rust, assistant district agriculture officer, Nainital, DS Mehta told *The Pioneer*. Mehta maintained that there has been no complaint of such a disease from any part of Nainital district so far. Yet necessary steps have been taken at the local level to create awareness among the farmers on the matter. Some parts of Nainital district, particularly Haldwani, Kotabagh and Ramnagar regions, are major wheat cultivation areas.

Among various rabi *crops*, the total area devoted to wheat is 24,001 hectares in Nainital district followed by *rai* on 1,300 hectares, barley on 1,000 hectares, *masoor* on 1,500 hectares, gram on 700 hectares and pea on 200 hectares, according to figures provided by the Nainital agriculture office.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Feb 14, 2012

Chana sheds 0.74% on profit-booking

Press Trust of India / New Delhi February 13, 2012, 15:06 IST



Amid profit-booking by speculators and sluggish spot demand, chana prices declined by Rs 27 to Rs 3,600 per quintal in futures trading today.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the February contract for chana declined by Rs 27, or 0.74% to Rs 3,600 per quintal with an open interest of 84,390 lots.

The March contract shed Rs 18, or 0.53%, to Rs 3,395 per quintal in 77,260 lots.

Analysts said besides profit-booking by speculators, sluggish demand in the spot market also kept pressure on chana prices at futures market.

Pepper declines 0.69% on rising arrivals

Press Trust of India / New Delhi February 13, 2012, 15:01 IST



Pepper prices dropped by Rs 205 to Rs 29,310 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators offloaded their positions, triggered by rising arrivals in the physical markets.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the February contract fell by Rs 205, or 0.69%, to Rs 29,310 per quintal with an open interest of 3,506 lots.

Likewise, the spice for delivery in March contract lost Rs 45, or 0.15% to Rs 29,770 per quintal in 3,223 lots.

Analysts said offloading of positions by speculators following rising arrivals of new crop in the spot market mainly kept pressure on the pepper prices at futures market.

Cardamom surges 3% on strong demand

Press Trust of India / New Delhi February 13, 2012, 14:46 IST



Cardamom prices surged by 3% to Rs 737.10 per kg in futures trade today, as speculators enlarged their positions, supported by strong demand in the spot market.

Tight stocks position in the physical market following restricted arrivals from producing regions further supported the upside in cardamom prices.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, the February contract for cardamom shot up by Rs 21.50, or 3%, to Rs 737.10 per kg in business turnover of 341 lots.

The March contract jumped up by Rs 22.90, or 3% to Rs 785.20 per kg in 1,514 lots.

Traders said besides strong demand in the spot market, supported by the ongoing marriage season, less arrivals from producing region mainly led an upsurge in cardamom futures prices.

Sandalwood finds few takers at auctions

High price a major hurdle only 12 out of 150 tonnes on offer find buyers

Mahesh Kulkarni / Bangalore February 14, 2012, 0:05 IST

The three major producers of sandalwood — Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu — have received lukewarm response from user industries and temple trusts for the auction of the precious wood. Of 150 tonnes put on auction last month by the three states together, hardly 12 tonnes have been sold.

An exorbitant price for the wood, which is known for its fragrance and medicinal properties, is cited as the major reason for the poor response. Karnataka managed to sell about 10 tonnes and Kerala another two to three tonnes.

In Tamil Nadu, many backed out due to the very high non-refundable participation fee. The Tamil Nadu forest department had put on auction about 100 tonnes and had postponed the auctions, industry sources said.

“Heartwood is priced at Rs 48-50 lakh a tonne and mixed wood or branches are priced in the range of Rs 24 lakh, making it out of reach for many buyers,” an official from Karnataka Soaps & Detergents Limited (KS&DL), told Business Standard, on condition of anonymity.

He said KS&DL, the state-owned enterprise that makes pure sandalwood soap, among other products, was a lone participant at the Tamil Nadu auctions. But, the government of Tamil Nadu postponed the auctions.

KS&DL did not participate in the auctions held by the forest department of the Kerala government. Kerala had put on auction about 40 tonnes, managed to sell two-three tonnes to a temple trust from south India. However, KS&DL purchased nine out of 10 tonnes sold through electronic auctions in Karnataka, he said.

Another major reason for the poor response is the availability of sandalwood oil at lesser rates in some places in north India.

Presently, sandalwood oil prices are ruling at around Rs 80,000 a kg, a decline of about 33 per cent over last year. There are some private distilleries in and around Delhi, selling their stocks at lesser price, as the export of sandalwood oil is banned by the government. Besides, the Supreme Court has recently banned the use of oil in pan masala and gutkha production, which also led to a drop in its prices, the source said.

The forest department of Tamil Nadu had managed to sell about 19 tonnes at an auction about three months ago.

Both, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, conduct auctions for their stocks twice a year, while Karnataka held its e-auctions after a gap of 18 months. KS&DL has emerged as the largest buyer in all the auctions this year. The company has entered into a long-term contract with the government of Maharashtra to supply sandalwood.

Industry sources said the wood being put up on auction in Tamil Nadu and Kerala is normally dead wood or fallen trees and the level of sandalwood oil in such wood is higher and yields up to 5.5-6 per cent. Whereas, Karnataka is likely to put on auction the seized trees that are normally tender and immature, which normally yield about four per cent oil.
