

Published: March 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 16, 2012 04:26 IST

Carrot seeds distributed

Staff Reporter

Farmers in Poomparai and Mannavanur get equipment

To improve productivity and production, Horticulture Department officials distributed high-yielding carrot seeds and farm equipment to farmers in Poomparai and Mannavanur, said Deputy Director of Horticulture (Central Schemes), Mr. S. Raja Mohamed.

Addressing a horticulture inputs distribution campaign held at Poomparai and Mannavanur, major carrot producing centres in Kodaikanal, on Wednesday, he said farmers could interact with the officials directly to convey their actual requirement of vegetable seeds for the current season and for the ensuing season.

They could also contact the officials on the technologies and appropriate solutions for the problems faced by them on the field.

Mr. Mohamed said that vegetable seeds were given to farmers with 50 per cent subsidy. A total of 225 kgs of such carrot seeds were procured from Ooty at a cost of Rs 3 lakh and distributed to farmers and power sprayers were given to 30 farmers. Carrot seeds were given to 72 farmers in this campaign.

Published: March 16, 2012 00:00 IST | Updated: March 16, 2012 04:37 IST

Call to halt export of cotton

Staff Reporter

The Powerloom Development and Export Promotion Council (PDEXCIL) on Wednesday called upon the Central Government to immediately halt the export of cotton as the targets have already been surpassed and also ensure that domestic demand was met.

Addressing a press conference here, PDEXCIL Vice Chairman (Southern Region) M. Duraisamy said that the Government must first ensure that domestic demand was met before allowing exports. The domestic demand was around 260 lakh bales every year.

The Director-General of Foreign Trade, on Monday, had issued a notification lifting the ban on cotton exports with around 84 lakh bales termed as “exportable surplus.” However, this level has been surpassed with around 95 lakh bales already exported. He also called upon the Tamil Nadu Government to expeditiously resolve the power crisis in the State which had hit hard the powerloom sector. An important effort in this direction, he said, would be resolving amicably the agitation against the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project. Mr. Duraisamy was in the city to take part in the inaugural of the fourth edition of Texpo 2012, an annual buyer- seller meet and exhibition of power loom fabrics and home textiles, being held here from Wednesday to Sunday.

Organised by PDEXCIL and Regional Office of Textile Commissioner, Coimbatore, the expo is being held with the objective to promote power loom products.

Speaking about the expo, he said that this was being held for the fourth consecutive year at Madurai. During the last expo, business to the tune of Rs. 60 lakh was transacted with several follow-on orders as well.

NEW DELHI, March 16, 2012

Small farm imports will hold price line: Survey

Regular imports of agricultural commodities in small quantities will ease supply-side constraints and help in food price stability, says the Economic Survey, 2011-12.

The report carries several references to inflation and high food prices during the 11th Plan period with suggestions that a compositional shift in the food basket of a common household was a major factor responsible: “The recent spurt in food prices was mainly driven by increase in items like fruits, vegetables, milk, meat, poultry and fish, which account for 70 per cent of the wholesale price index basket for primary food items.”

In a significant observation, the Survey points out that food consumption expenditure during 1987-88—2009-10 revealed a shift in expenditure towards milk and milk products, eggs, fish, meat and fish and vegetables in both rural and urban areas, whereas consumption of cereals in the total food basket went down. The shift has been responsible for high food prices.

“As a strategy, regular imports of agricultural commodities in relatively smaller quantities with an upper ceiling on total quantity could be considered.” This could be done after assessing the domestic production and consumption requirements.

With a 1.2 per cent share of world trade in agriculture in 2010, India's farm imports were valued at \$17.5 billion that year.

Indicating that Foreign Direct Investment in multi-brand retail was imminent, the Survey calls for opening up mandis and setting in place organised trade in agriculture. “Considering significant investment gaps in post-harvest infrastructure of agricultural produce, organised trade in agriculture should be encouraged and the FDI in multi-brand retail, once implemented, could be effectively leveraged towards this end.”

ERODE, March 16, 2012

Rise in pineapple price in Erode district

: Pineapple price in the district have gone up by almost 10 to 15 per cent this summer as compared to the same period last year due to increased demand.

The arrival of pineapple in the Erode market remains low despite the increased demand.

Supply from Kerala

The market gets 80 per cent of the supply from Kerala, where the production at this time of the year is reported to be less.

“The supply will increase when the new crop hits the market in June. But the demand for the fruit normally occurs during the summer,” says wholesale trader C.M. Unnikrishnan.

Vazhakulam (40 km from Kochi) is the primary market for pineapple, where wholesale price of the fruit now stands at Rs. 18,000 to Rs. 22,000 a tonne.

Demand going up

The price is expected to touch Rs. 28,000 in April, as the demand for the fruit in North India is likely go up, Mr. Unnikrishnan says.

The wholesale price stood around Rs. 16,000 during the same period last year, he adds.

The fruit retailers in the district report a good demand for pineapples and claim that the supply is inadequate.

The Erode market currently gets around 20 tonnes of pineapples a week.

With the mercury rising, people depend on fruits like watermelon and pineapples to quench their thirst.

“The retail price hovers around Rs. 30-a-kg now,” says M. Rajesh Kumar, a fruit seller in the town.

ERODE, March 16, 2012

Steps taken to solve space problem faced by turmeric farmers

The Regulated Marketing Committee has permitted the authorities of the private turmeric market here to rent a marriage hall in order to provide adequate space to the farmers to place their sample lots.

The permission was given as farmers faced problems due to shortage of space in the private turmeric market. The existing market premises has space to accommodate around 500 to 700 sample lots of turmeric.

Since the turmeric arrival picked up in the recent past, the number of sample lots had gone up to 1,000 to 1,500. On March 12, farmers had over 2,000 sample lots to display.

This had forced them to display more than 700 lots on the street. A few weeks ago, farmers boycotted the auction at the private market protesting against the shortage of space. A section of farmers also submitted a petition to the district administration demanding adequate space in the turmeric markets to display the sample lots.

Following this, the administration directed the regulated marketing committee to sort out the issue. Hence, the committee had permitted the authorities of the private market to take a marriage hall, located on the Park Road here, for rent and allow the farmers to place their sample lots there.

The committee also allowed the conduct of auction in the marriage hall. It, however, stated that the permission was only for a temporary period.

Meanwhile, turmeric growers in the district appealed to the administration to complete the construction of Integrated Turmeric complex at Karumandichellipalayam quickly and open it for the conduct of turmeric auction.

Currently, the auction is taking place in four places belonging to Erode Turmeric Merchants Association, Regulated Marketing Committee, Erode and Gobichettipalayam Cooperative Marketing Societies.

Farmers wanted the administration to move the turmeric auction to the complex at Karumandichellipalayam after completing the construction works. The conduction of auction under a single roof would help address various issues related to turmeric marketing, they pointed out.

KOLAR, March 16, 2012

Rs. 1.5 crore bonus for dairy farmers

The Kolar and Chickballapur District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Limited (KOCHIMUL) has announced that it will give farmers 30 paise per litre of milk supplied between January 1 to March 15, 2012 as bonus.

The total bonus on this count amounts to Rs. 1.51 crore, KOCHIMUL president A.V. Prasanna told presspersons here on Thursday.

Similarly, Rs. 50 lakh will be given to milk societies for improving their infrastructure, he said.

The silver jubilee ceremony of the union will be organised in May this year, he said.

Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda will participate in it, according to Dr. Prasanna.

Expansion plans

KOCHIMUL managing director G.T. Gopal announced several expansion and marketing projects, including a mega parlour on National Highway 4 for the convenience of travellers.

The former president of the union Jayasimha Krishnappa was present.

ALAPPUZHA, March 16, 2012

Directive to procure paddy at Thuravur

District Collector Sourabh Jain said that he will hold talks with the Civil Supplies Corporation on procuring 80 tonnes of paddy which was lying unprocured at Thuravur in the district, following doubts over its quality.

The Collector was chairing the executive committee meeting of the Thuravur Kole-field Development Agency here on Thursday.

He instructed the KSEB officials to sanction power connections on agricultural category to undertake pumping out water from paddy polders.

He also instructed to speed up the necessary steps to operate power-driven shutters of Andhakaranazhi and to prevent excessive flow of saline water for fish farming.

KANNUR, March 16, 2012

'Make forests rich in medicinal plants'

Workshop for members of Vana Samrakshana Samithis

Unscientific exploitation of forest resources and recurring incidents of forest fires have led to the depletion of medicinal plants in forest areas in the State, according to speakers at a workshop on protection of herbal plants here.

Inaugurating the one-day workshop for members of Vana Samrakshana Samithis (VSSs) under the Kannur Social Forestry Division on Wednesday, Chief Forest Conservator (Northern circle) D.K. Varma said that India is a leading country involved in the management and protection of medicinal plants as it has a rich tradition of Ayurveda-based healing practices. However, availability of medicinal plants has decreased over the years as a result of reduction in forest areas, encroachments, and forest fires. In the State there are 23 Ayurveda drugs-making companies, including Oushadhi in the government sector. Though the State is known to have rich forest areas, herbal medicines from the State's forest areas account for only 30 to 40 per

cent of the total requirement in the State. The Himalayan region is the other medicinal plants-rich area in the country.

Attributing the decline in the availability of medicinal plants to unscientific exploitation of forest wealth and recurring incidents of forest fires, he called upon the VSSs to cultivate medicinal plants as a project under the Forest Development Authority (FDA). The potential of the State in extending the area under cultivation of medicinal plants should be tapped fully, he said adding that each VSS should take steps to cultivate such plants in their respective forest areas.

The State once had a great reputation as a major source of medicinal plants, he said adding that today cultivators in northern States are growing the plants in large areas. Medicinal plants are the beauty of the forests, he observed.

Divisional Forest Officer A. Ranjan said that efforts to increase the quantity of medicinal plants in the State have gained importance as Ayurveda is now being recognised as an effective healing system. DFO (Flying Squad) John Mathew said that non-availability of genuine medicinal plants is affecting the quality of Ayurveda concoctions.

The inaugural session was inaugurated by Social Forestry Division assistant conservator K.M. Sreekumar. Forest range officer K. Premarajan was also present.

Integrated Rural Technology Centre project coordinator M.K.P. Mavilayi and P.V. Dasan took classes at the workshop.

-
- *VSSs told to cultivate plants in respective areas*
 - *23 Ayurveda drugs-making companies in State*

Agencies

New Delhi, March 16, 2012

First Published: 09:06 IST(16/3/2012)

Last Updated: 10:22 IST(16/3/2012)

Pranab dares or ducks reforms: India waits to know

Amid high expectations and political compulsions, finance minister Pranab Mukherjee will present Union Budget 2012-13 on Friday. The big question is will he be able to boost the economic growth, control inflation and reduce the fiscal deficit through his budget.

An even tougher question is, will Pranab Mukherjee be able to satisfy not only the opposition but his own allies like the Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress through his budget? The opposition of the Railway Budget by its own ally TMC shows that it is one of the most difficult year for the finance minister as he presents the budget.

Bold economic reforms are the need of the hour but how will he deliver this is what every one wants to see. Will the finance minister be able to respond to the growing chorus of a policy paralysis and concerns over a slowing economy through his budget?

The indications are that Mukherjee might have good news for the salaried class as he might marginally raise the income tax exemption limit by Rs 20,000 to Rs 2 lakh per annum. This will leave more money in the hands of people stung by inflation and in an economy that's staring at the prospect of a sustained slowdown.

The Economic Survey, tabled in Parliament on Thursday, said growth would gather speed over the next two years, but radical policy changes, including FDI in retail and availability of farm land for the industry, were needed. The survey pegged the annual economic growth at about 7.6% in 2012-13 and 8.6% in the year after. The survey obliquely hinted that political compulsions had forced a delay in reforms in key areas. "There were also the pressures of democratic politics, which slowed reforms," it said.



But question marks hung over how many of the survey's intentions could fructify. Similar recommendations in the past have not always found reflection in the Budget.

"It (the survey) is a vital input for preparation of the Budget. I view this Economic Survey as a vehicle for new ideas and alternative policy options," said Mukherjee.






According to former finance minister and BJP leader Yashwant Sinha, "The finance minister should cut expenditure left and right. In eight years, this government has gone on increasing expenditure and shown no discipline."

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/826178.aspx>

Delhi - INDIA

Today's Weather  Sunny Rain: 00 mm in 24hrs Humidity: 82% Wind: Normal	Friday, Mar 16 Max Min 27.8° 14.2° Sunrise: 7:14 Sunset: 17:48 Barometer: 1013	Tomorrow's Forecast  Sunny Max Min 29° 11°	Saturday, Mar 17 Max Min 29° 11°
--	--	---	---

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Mar 18	Monday Mar 19	Tuesday Mar 20	Wednesday Mar 21	Thursday Mar 22
				
31° 14° Sunny	30° 14° Sunny	32° 15° Sunny	32° 15° Sunny	33° 15° Sunny



Pranab Mukherjee to present 81st Union Budget in history

Agencies Posted online: Fri Mar 16 2012, 09:44 hrs

New Delhi : The government will present its 81st Budget proposals in the history of independent India, when Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee reads out his taxation and other economic policies before the Parliament.

Individually, Mukherjee will present the Union Budget for the seventh time, the second-highest by any Finance Minister.

The Parliament has so far hosted 80 Budget speeches, including interim and special-situation Budgetary proposals, ever since the first union Budget of independent India was presented by then Finance Minister R K Shanmukham Chetty on November 26, 1947.

The maximum number of 10 Budgets have been presented by Morarji Desai, while Mukherjee will join the league of P Chidambaram, Yashwant Sinha, Y B Chavan and C D Deshmukh, who have presented seven Budgets each in the past.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the country's fourth Finance Minister T T Krishnamachari have presented six Budgets each during their tenures in the Finance Ministry.

Mukherjee has so far presented six annual Budgets, including the Budgets for two consecutive financial years, 2010-11 and 2011-12, and an interim Budget before that for the fiscal 2009-10. Way back in early 80s also, Mukherjee had presented three consecutive Budgets.

Among others, R Venkatraman and H M Patel have presented three Budgets each, while Jaswant Singh, V P Singh, C Subramaniam, John Mathai and R K Shanmukham Chetty have two Budgets each to their credits.

Besides, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi, Charan Singh, N D Tiwari, Madhu Dandwate, S B Chavan and Sachindra Chaudhuri have presented one Budget each. Nehru, Indira and Rajiv Gandhi had presented Budget in their capacity as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. Charan Singh (once) and Morarji Desai (on four occasions) presented Budget as Deputy PM and Minister of Finance. So far, the country has seen 64 normal annual Budgets, while there have been 12 interim Budgets and four special – occasion Budgetary proposals, also known as mini Budgets. The first such mini-Budget was presented by T T Krishnamachari on November 30, 1956 in form of fresh taxation proposals through Finance Bills, demanded by the prevailing domestic and international economic situation. The step was also required to tackle issues like rising inflation and dwindling forex reserves at that time. The second mid-year Budget taxation proposals were also presented by Krishnamachari in August 1965, while the third mini-Budget was presented by Y B Chavan in December 1971 wherein he proposed additional measures for mobilisation of resources for defence requirements.

The last mini-Budget proposals in the Parliament was also made by Chavan in July 1974, wherein he made fresh taxation proposals to tackle inflation-related issues after only five months of the regular annual Budget.



By IBNLive

16 Mar 2012 09:30:08 AM IST

Will Pranab's budget be able to boost growth?

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee is all set to present the Union Budget in Parliament on Friday. This will be his seventh and it comes against the backdrop of slowing growth and burgeoning fiscal deficit.

The government will have to do a balancing act, by raising taxes and at the same time giving incentives to boost investor confidence. A balancing act is needed in a bid to spur growth.

There are indirect taxes that pinch the common man. It remains to be seen whether the Finance Minister will change the income tax slabs and change the saving exemption limit. Sources say the tax exemption limit is likely to be raised.

Economic growth has slowed down and so it will be a tough task for the Finance Minister.

A big question is whether Pranab will go for big ticket reforms or will political compulsions force him to go for a diluted budget.

The markets are expecting the Finance Minister to go for fiscal consolidation. There is a need to bring fiscal deficit under control. A cut in wasteful expenditure is also required.

The markets also want deregulation of diesel prices. A hike in petrol prices may also be on the cards.

The Finance Minister is expected to push for reforms. Infrastructure bottlenecks also need to be addressed.

Chief Economic Advisor Kaushik Basu, who presented the Economic Survey on Thursday, said the Indian economy has some fundamental strengths, but a few reforms are really needed.

Will political compulsions prevent the Finance Minister getting a grip on finances?

Railway Minister Dinesh Trivedi has had to face flak from his own party after he announced a hike in passenger fares while presenting the Rail Budget 2012.

If the UPA allies do not allow a fare hike, it remains to be seen whether they allow Pranab to cut fuel subsidies.

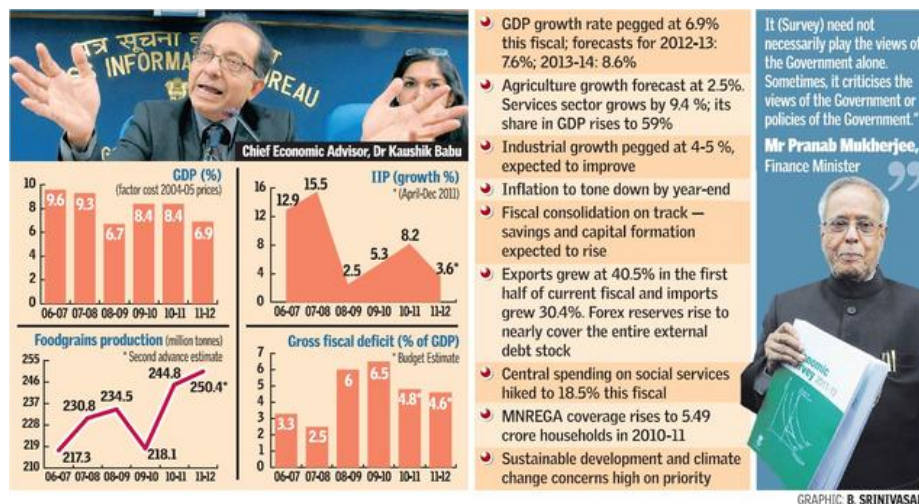
Another big question is whether such political interferences will deter the Finance Minister from going for controversial reforms.

Not just the Opposition, but the UPA allies have also been opposing reforms like FDI in retail. Experts feel political pressure will prevent the Finance Minister from taking bold decisions in Budget 2012. Speaking to CNN-IBN, Economic researcher Srivatsa Krishna said, "I'm not positive about the Finance Minister taking bold decisions and going for controversial reforms this Budget."

Pick-up in economy imminent with weakness bottoming out: Survey

Shishir Sinha

K.R. Srivats



Sees manufacturing leading growth; market unimpressed

New Delhi, March 15:

The Economic Survey's prediction of a rebound in growth to close to 8 per cent levels in the coming financial year and 8.6 per cent in the year after failed to cheer investors. The BSE Sensex tanked by over 200 points to close at 17,682.14 points, down 1.32 per cent.

Investors shed holdings in interest rate-sensitive stocks as the Reserve Bank of India, whose quarterly review of monetary policy coincided with the Economic Survey's release, left interest rates unchanged on inflation fears.

Highlights of Economic Survey (PDF)

But the Government's economic advisers remained upbeat about growth prospects. However, with manufacturing expected to play a bigger role in the growth story, the Economic Survey echoed the concerns of industry on rising cost of funds, land and energy.

The Survey estimates the economy to grow at 7.35-7.85 per cent during 2012-13 against 6.9 per cent in the current fiscal. Mr Kaushik Basu, chief author of the Survey and the Government's Chief Economic Adviser, remarked that manufacturing will lead the improvement of the growth estimate.

“There are signs from some high frequency indicators that the weakness in economic activity has bottomed out and a gradual upswing is imminent,” the Survey said.

Inflationary pressure

It added that the likely easing of inflationary pressure and subsequent reduction in interest rates would fuel economic growth, though it cautioned that rising crude prices in the international market would continue to put pressure on prices.

Though the economic crisis in Europe has affected the growth in India, the Survey said, “There is no doubt that a part of India's slowdown is rooted in domestic causes. The persistent inflation that remained over 9 per cent for much of the year and needed to be tamed played a role.”

Summary of Economic Survey (PDF)

The Survey feels that as fiscal consolidation gets back on track, savings and capital formation should begin to rise. It expected inflation to peak around 7 per cent by March 2012 and moderate thereafter.

Costly funds

However, the Survey indicates that industry has been impacted by a double whammy of high interest rates and a volatile rupee. “Such volatility impairs investor confidence and has implication for corporate balance-sheets and profitability in case of high exposure to External Commercial Borrowings (ECB) when currency is depreciating.”

Admitting that land availability was hurting industrial growth, the Survey said, “There is need to resolve the issue of availability of land for industrial and infrastructure use. National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs) are a key tool for facilitating the growth of manufacturing sector, which cannot take off in the absence of a well-thought-out and standardised approach to land acquisition.”

Economic Survey (Full Text - PDF)

The Survey advocated allocation of agricultural land for manufacturing. It believed that such a move is crucially linked with the issue of agricultural productivity and food security.

Fuel for Industries

Since coal is a primary energy input for power generation, steel and cement, the core of not just manufacturing but also of services lies in the this source. The Survey expressed unhappiness at the near monopolistic position of Coal India.

The Survey called for a “transparent and credible” pricing policy for coal which should be based on global norms. It also wants competition in the production of coal.

Oil up in Asia as US-British crude pact denied

PTI

Singapore, March 16:

Oil prices rose in Asian trade today after the US and Britain denied reports that the two countries had agreed to release strategic reserves of crude, analysts said.

New York’s main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in April, was up 36 cents at \$105.47, while Brent North Sea crude for May delivery gained 37 cents to \$122.97 on its first trading day.

The White House confirmed that the issue was discussed by the US President, Mr Barack Obama, and the British Prime Minister, Mr David Cameron, but denied that there was a pact.

“I can tell you that among the many topics of discussion that the British Prime Minister and the US President had were energy issues. And the situation globally with the rise in the price of oil,” said the White House spokesman, Mr Jay Carney.

“But I can say very clearly that the report suggesting that any kind of an agreement was reached on a course of action with regard to those energy issues, that any agreement was reached with a timetable associated with it, that report is false. It is not accurate.”

Mr Victor Shum, senior principal of Purvin and Gertz energy consultants in Singapore, said: “Oil has been rebounding since that denial.”

Crude prices — which have risen in recent months amid concerns over a stand-off between the West and Iran — had fallen by more than \$2 in New York and more than \$4 in London before the denial.

Mustard oil seen bullish on lower seed output

Our Bureau



Indore, March 15:

Bullish trend continued in mustard oil on weak arrival and strong buying support.

In mandis here, mustard oil ruled at Rs 737 for 10 kg against Rs 725 last week. In Neemuch, mustard oil ruled at Rs 731 (up Re 1), while in Morena it ruled stable at Rs 735 for 10 kg.

However, compared with prices a week ago, mustard oil both in Neemuch and Morena mandis increased by Rs 11 and Rs 10 respectively. In Rajasthan, mustard oil in Kota and Morena gained Rs 5 each at Rs 745 for 10 kg. Similarly in Jaipur also, it gained Rs 5 to Rs 760 for 10 kg, while in Gujarat it was at Rs 730 (up Rs 2).

Arrival of mustard seeds at Mandsaur and Neemuch mandis of Madhya Pradesh on Thursday declined to 4,500 bags against 3.5-4 lakh bags across the country. Mustard seeds ruled firm in Neemuch and Mandsaur mandis. While in Neemuch mandi, mustard seeds ruled at Rs 3,300-3,350 a quintal, in Mandsaur mandi, it ruled at Rs 3,250-3,260 a quintal.

Given weak crop and decline in arrival both in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, bullish trend in mustard seeds is likely to continue, said Neemuch-based mustard seeds trader Mr Kamlesh Nahata.

Keeping in view lower output this year, stockists have started building inventories of mustard seeds and if this trend continued, mustard seeds may touch Rs 4,500 a quintal by August and September, said Mr Nahata.

Though the Government has estimated production at about 66 lakh tonnes, it is unlikely to cross 53 lakh tonnes, given poor acreage and crop conditions in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, said Jawad-based mustard seeds trader, Mr Vijay Kumar Jain.

Jeera slides on higher inflows

Our Correspondent



Rajkot, March 15:

Jeera fell in the futures and spot markets on Thursday on higher arrival. Demand was also below normal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), the April contract declined by Rs 42.50 to Rs 13,202.50 a quintal, with an open interest of 17,184 lots, while May decreased by Rs 25 to Rs 13,487.50 with an open interest of 5,856 lots. In NCDEX-accredited warehouses, stocks gained 249 tonnes to 5,616 tonnes.

At the agricultural produce marketing committee (APMC) here, jeera dropped by Rs 10 to Rs 2,000-2,490 for 20 kg and about 3,500-3,700 bags arrived. In Unjha APMC, it was traded at Rs 2,100-2,525.

About 27,000-28,000 bags of 60 kg each of the new crop have been arriving daily in the Unjha market in Gujarat, of which 20,000-22,000 gets traded.

According to Mumbai-based Kedia Commodity, jeera prices dropped due to higher supplies even as output this year is expected to be higher.

Analysts said offloading of positions by speculators following rising arrivals of new season crop in the market mainly put pressure on the futures trade here.

According to the Spices Board of India, exports during April-December were 31,500 tonnes as compared to 21,750 tonnes in the same period 2010-11, an increase of 45 per cent.

According to market traders, production in 2011-12 is expected to be around 35 lakh bags as compared to 29 lakh bags in 2010-11.

Pepper recovers on buying support

G. K. Nair



Kochi, March 15:

Pepper recovered on Thursday on buying interest amid limited supply, with active contracts except March moving up substantially.

The market was highly volatile and in the beginning of the closing session April and May contracts touched the second upper circuit level and then sharply declined to recover and end with the LTP much above the previous day's last closing price. In fact, it was a battle ground for the bull and bear operators who were pushing up and pulling down the prices, the trade said adding "even spot sellers were getting confused."

As the availability of the physical pepper is very tight with the prices ruling high those operators who feel bearish could very well be here, market sources told *Business Line*.

There was good domestic demand and it was met by supplies from Karnataka. Inter-State dealers from Erode and Gudalur were buying high range pepper from Idukki for dispatching to North Indian markets, they said.

Arrivals from the primary markets of fresh pepper were very thin. There were no activities on the spot worth mentioning , they said.

March contract on the NCDEX moved up by Rs 315 to last trading price (LTP) of Rs 40,425 a quintal. April and May increased by Rs 1,005 and Rs 1,235, respectively, to a LTP of Rs 42,550 and Rs 43,175 a quintal.

Total turnover went up by 581 tonnes to 12,347 tonnes indicating limited activities. Total open interest increased by 352 tonnes to 10,389 tonnes.

March open interest dropped by 289 tonnes to 1,281 tonnes, while that of April and May increased by 601 tonnes and 40 tonnes, respectively, to close at 7,055 tonnes and 1,666 tonnes. There was liquidation, switching over and good additional purchases.

Spot prices, in tandem with the futures market trend and good domestic demand, moved up by Rs 900 to close at Rs 38,900 (ungarlbcd) and Rs 40,400 (MG 1) a quintal.

Wheat flat on steady demand

Our Correspondent



Karnal, March 15:

The wheat market ruled flat with all varieties maintaining their previous levels on Thursday.

Mr Subhash Chander, a wheat trader, told *Business Line* that since the demand matched supply in the market, wheat prices were unchanged since Tuesday. "It is unlikely to see any uptrend from here as the new crop is expected to arrive in the market from the first week of April," he said.

In the physical market, prices of the *dara* variety quoted around Rs 1,210-1,215 a quintal, after witnessing a rise earlier this week. Only around 20 tonnes of *dara* variety arrived from Uttar Pradesh and stocks were directly delivered at the mills. Mill delivery of *dara* was at Rs 1,210 a quintal, while the delivery at *chakki* was at Rs 1,215.

Tohfa, a *desi* wheat variety, ruled flat and quoted at Rs 2,300 a quintal.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, wheat for March delivery increased by Rs 2 to Rs 1,202 a quintal, it had touched a high at Rs 1,204 a quintal earlier on Thursday. Spot prices on the MCX increased by Rs 6.20 to Rs1,256.20 a quintal.

Flour Prices

With a steady trend in wheat, flour prices remained unchanged and quoted at Rs 1,190 for a 90-kg bag. Similarly, after witnessing a fall earlier this week, *chokar* prices ruled flat and quoted at Rs 595-605 for a 49-kg bag.

Rabi season

About 70 lakh tonnes of wheat is likely be procured in Haryana during next rabi season, and 371 purchase centres would be opened to ensure smooth procurement, say reports. Arrangement has also been made with the Reserve Bank of India to ensure timely payment to the farmers.

Egg tumbles on low consumption

Our Bureau



Chennai, March 15:

Wholesale egg dropped by 10 paise to Rs 2.60 a piece this week with the onset of summer.

The Namakkal-based National Egg Coordination Committee (NECC) has been steadily slashing the egg price to perk up offtake and to avoid building up inventories.

Drop in the egg price in summer is quite expected and it is effected so as to stay in pace with the prices at other NECC zones across the country, as the rising mercury reduces consumption, according to the NECC's Zonal Chairman, Mr P. Selvaraj. Consumption in Tamil Nadu and other States such as Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh — major markets for Tamil Nadu's shell egg and broiler trade — has started to pick up slowly with the austere festivities coming to an end.

But in Kerala, the consumption has taken a beating with the starting of the Lent season, after which prices may recover a tad, said poultry sources.

The egg price, which touched a record Rs 3.20 a piece in December 26 last year (and maintained till January 7) was on the downside, but not for too long.

It perked up again towards January-end and has been rising constantly, slowly inching up towards the Rs 3 mark. On the other hand, average daily production of eggs is down by 15 lakh a day.

The weekly supply of 3.5 crore eggs to Government schools under the noon-meal scheme has also started sliding as the board exams have already begun.

However, the present lean patch in terms of offtake in view of the Lent season and public examinations is expected to give way soon, leading to demand pick-up, sources said.

On the exports front, the country has started shipping table eggs to Afghanistan. Mr Selvaraj told *Business Line* that they are now shipping considerable containers of eggs to Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the price of layer birds surged a tad by Rs 3 a kg to Rs 31 while the Broiler Coordination Committee's rate for cull birds is up by Rs 12 a kg to Rs 70.

Higher duty prospect lifts imported oils



Mumbai, March 15:

Imported palmolein and soya oil improved by Rs 2 and Rs 3 for 10 kg on Thursday on improved buying interest from stockist ahead of the Union Budget. A wholesaler said market was firm on expectation that import duty would be increased in the Budget on Friday.

Expectation of changes in import duty and tariff structure pushed up new buying. Malaysian crude palm oil futures extended gains, supported by higher exports and physical buying interest. Groundnut oil rose by Rs 10, rapeseed oil by Rs 5 and cottonseed refined oil by Rs 2 for 10 kg.

Volume increased on improved retail demand. Local refiners increased prices of imported oils by Rs 3-5 for 10 kg. Indigenous cottonseed, rapeseed and sunflower seed oils also rose on firm reports from the producing centres. Local refiners sold about 450-500 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 586-588, while resellers traded 150-200 tonnes at Rs 585-588. Liberty offered palmolein at Rs 595-596. Ruchi quoted it at Rs 593, soya refined oil at Rs 690 and sunflower seed refined oil at Rs 697. Allana offered palmolein at Rs 595. In Saurashtra, groundnut oil dropped by Rs 25 on eased demand from exporters for nuts and as improved arrivals in the southern states led to heavy sales. In Rajkot, groundnut oil was down to Rs 1,790 (Rs 1,815) for a *telia* tin and to Rs 1,165 (Rs 1,180) for loose (10 kg).

Malaysian crude palm oil's April contract settled higher at 3,393 ringgit (3,380 ringgit), May at 3,403 ringgit (3,385 ringgit) and June at 3,397 ringgit (3,378 ringgit) a tonne. On the National Board of Trade in Indore, soya refined oil for March delivery closed at Rs 723 (Rs 724) and for April at Rs 737 (Rs 731).

Bombay Commodity Exchange spot rates (Rs/10 kg): groundnut oil 1,170 (1,160), soya refined oil 685 (682), sunflower seed exp. ref. 640 (640), sunflower seed ref. 705 (700), rapeseed ref. oil 805 (800), rapeseed expeller ref. 775 (770) cottonseed ref. oil 662 (660) and palmolein 584 (582).

Sugar prices drop on lack of demand

Our Correspondent



Mumbai, March 15:

Sugar prices fell by Rs 8-10 at spot and naka delivery levels on Thursday, tracking weak sentiment at upper level. Mill tender rates declined by Rs 10-15 a quintal on routine retail demand. Higher production in Maharashtra and national level is forcing producers to continue regular sale as there has not been purchases from neighbouring States for long. Sentiment was weak due to less-than-expected retail demand, said traders.

Though there is less demand from local and upcountry buyers now, market sources say traders are bullish on hopes that the onset of summer will spur demand. Sugar prices are currently ruling below input costs, according to industry sources, ruling out a further decline. Sugar industry's demand for additional exports, if met, will fuel the sentiment.

This year, government has already allowed 20 lakh tonnes for exports. Announcement of additional export quota will lead to a hand-to-mouth situation at domestic level. A clear picture of current year's production will emerge by end-April.

In February, International Sugar Organization increased its forecast for the global surplus in 2011/12 to 51.7 lakh tonnes, compared with its projection of 44.6 lakh tonnes made in November.

The ISO has estimated total world production at a record 1,730 lakh tonnes and global consumption to reach 1,678.3 lakh tonnes with healthy 2.32 per cent growth on the year. In world market, sugar futures extended gains for third consecutive day. On Wednesday, Sugar May-12 futures closed higher by \$7.60 to \$648.90 (\$641.30) and an August-12 future up by \$5.80 to \$624.40 (\$618.60).

Arrivals to Vashi market were about 53-54 truckloads and dispatches were about 48-50 loads.

On Wednesday, about 21-22 mills offered tenders and sold about 83,000-85,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,715-2,790 (Rs 2,730-2,800) for S-grade and Rs 2,820-2,900 (Rs 2,830-2,900) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 2,872-2,952 (Rs 2,876-2,962) and M-grade Rs 2,956-3,051 (Rs 2,941-3,061).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 2,815-2,860 (Rs 2,820-2,860) and M-grade Rs 2,920-2,990 (Rs 2,920-3,000).

Spot rubber prices improve



Kottayam, March 15:

Physical rubber prices improved further on Thursday. According to sources, the market appeared to be moving under the control of speculators as it ruled visibly above domestic futures.

Major manufacturers were mostly inactive and hence, volumes continued to be dull amidst low supplies.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 192 from Rs 191 and Rs 191.50 a kg respectively, according to traders and the Rubber Board.

RSS 4 firmed up with the March series rising to Rs 191.35 (189.85), April to Rs 196.21 (196.12), May to Rs 201 (200.91), June to Rs 203.24 (202.75) and July to Rs 202.49 (202.26) a kg, while the August series slipped to Rs 202.40 (203.10) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) dropped to Rs 200.37 (202.54) a kg at Bangkok. The March futures weakened from ¥320.9 a kg to ¥316 (Rs 191.08) a kg in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 192 (191); RSS-5: 189.50 (189); ungraded: 186.50 (185); ISNR 20: 190 (189.50) and latex 60 per cent: 130 (129).

Plans afoot for autumn speciality tea auction



Coonoor, March 15:

The Nilgiri Planters' Association (NPA), which generated record prices at the winter speciality tea auction last week for black, white and green teas, is now preparing to conduct its autumn speciality tea auction.

“The pan-India coverage at the winter auction has given us encouraging results. It accorded wide exposure to Nilgiri speciality teas as evident from the increased demand from a broad cross-section of buyers. Based on this, we are now planning the autumn sale. This is proposed to take place in October to market those speciality teas which will be manufactured this autumn. Henceforth, we will make the winter and autumn sales regular,” the NPA Chairman, Mr Suresh Jacob, told *Business Line* on Thursday.

Tea Board which was the principal sponsor for the winter auction will support future auctions as well. “Such auctions should be regular. We will support them as they help to project good image for Nilgiri teas and improved returns to the producers,” Board Chairman, Mr M.G.V.K. Bhanu, said.

“The pan-India coverage helped a lot for the winter auction. We are now working on shifting regular e-auctions themselves to pan-India platform to broaden buyer base and help better price recovery,” he told *Business Line*. The winter auction also helped to market for the first time in India some multi-brew teas like Avataa which are popular in the US and Europe. Avataa Virgin Green from Bluegate Beverages fetched the highest price among green teas.

Tamil Nadu mills see 20% growth in sugar output

R. Balaji



Chennai, March 15:

Sugar mills in Tamil Nadu are seeing significant increases in sugarcane arrivals and sugar recovery and are well set to achieve the output forecast early in the season.

According to industry sources, sugarcane arrivals in the private sector mills have grown by more than 45 per cent as of February as compared with the same period last year. Sugar recovery in the private sector mills has also increased by about 50 basis points.

These augur well for the sugar mills, particularly in the context of the higher sugar recovery in tandem with the sugarcane arrivals.

However, the growth is restricted to the 26 private sector sugar mills and the cooperative sector mills' arrivals and recoveries are stagnant.

According to industry estimates, total sugarcane arrivals for the private and cooperative sector sugar mills in the State up to February during the ongoing 2011-12 season is estimated at about 98 lakh tonnes against 75 lakh tonnes in the same period last year. Sugar production is at 8.6 lakh tonnes (6.75 lakh tonnes). Sugar recovery is at 9.41 per cent (9.05 per cent).

Based on the status of the season, the industry is confident that it would be able to achieve the forecasted sugar production of over 22.5 lakh tonnes in the current season, a 20 per cent increase over the last season.

With the sugarcane prices in the State pegged at Rs 2,100 a tonne linked to 9.5 per cent sugar mills are not too badly off as compared with the prevailing sugar prices which ranges around Rs 2,650-2,700 a quintal. With all India sugar production pegged at 260 lakh tonnes there is still some cause for concern on sugar prices dropping, said a sugar mill representative.

The outlook for the coming season in 2012-13, based on the planting progress is buoyant with the growth in sugarcane arrivals expected to sustain, they say.

Fertiliser subsidy payments of Rs 11,100 cr pending: Jena

PTI



Mr Srikant Jena

New Delhi, March 15:

The subsidy payments to the tune of about Rs 11,100 crore for imported urea and phosphatic and potassic fertilisers are pending due to shortfall in Budget provisions, Parliament was informed today.

In a written reply to Lok Sabha, the Minister of State for Chemicals and Fertilisers, Mr Srikant Jena, said: "...due to shortfall in availability of the Budget provision, payments for imported urea and subsidy for imported P&K fertilisers have been temporarily delayed".

Mr Jena further said that a part of the total outstanding claims of about Rs 11,100 crore for imported fertilisers is expected to be met out of the additional Budget allocation for the year 2011-12 and the balance would be settled in the next fiscal.

On the issue of fertilisers availability for the upcoming kharif season starting June, Mr Jena said that there is no shortage.

"The Government has taken necessary steps to ensure adequate availability of fertilisers in the ensuing kharif season and there is no likelihood of shortage of fertilisers resulting in food inflation," he added.

Centre plans integrated mission to drive farm mechanisation among small growers

Our Bureau

Tractors & power tillers sales		
Year	Tractors (Nos.)	Power Tillers (Nos.)
2004-05	2,47,531	17,481
2005-06	2,96,080	22,303
2006-07	3,52,835	24,791
2007-08	3,46,501	26,135
2008-09	3,42,836	35,294
2009-10	3,93,836	38,794
2010-11	5,45,109	55,000
2011-12*	4,19,270	39,900

*Upto December 2011)
Source: Department of Agriculture
and Cooperation

Chennai, March 15:

The Centre plans to formulate an integrated National Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation. The mission aims at helping spread the benefits of farm mechanisation among small and marginal farmers.

In its report on “State of Indian Agriculture” tabled in the Parliament, the Government said that special emphasis would be given on “reaching the unreached”. This means mechanisation will be introduced in villages where age-old technologies are being followed.

The mission also proposes to cater to “adverse economies of scale” by promoting “Custom Hiring Services” through entrepreneurship model.

Farm mechanisation has achieved less than 5 per cent growth in the last two decades, the report said. But it has now become a necessity due to problems such as labour availability for farm operations.

Spelling out the Government's proposals, the report said the mission would increase the reach of mechanisation to areas where availability of farm power is low.

PASSING ON BENEFITS

It would pass on benefits of high-tech, high-value and high productive and agriculture machinery to farmers through creation of hubs for farm equipment.

Awareness about mechanisation will be promoted among stakeholders, while quality of new-developed machinery would be ensured through performance evaluation. Besides, certification would be done at designated testing centres that will be located across the country, the report said.

For accelerated and inclusive growth of farm mechanisation, the Government would resort to training, testing and demonstrations. Post-harvest technology and management would be introduced, while financial assistance or procurement subsidy for machinery and equipment would be extended.

The Centre will also establish farm machinery banks for custom hiring, the report said.

FARM MACHINERY

The report said concerted efforts of Union and State governments have led to better adoption of mechanisation in land preparation, tilling, harvest and transplantation. Equipment such as reaper-cum-binder, combine harvester, tractor-operated seed-cum-fertiliser drill, rice transplanter and laser land leveller are becoming popular.

The Government was keen to promote mechanisation since besides saving time and labour, it also cut production costs in the long run and reduced post-harvest losses.

Farm mechanisation has also become more relevant in mitigating the effect of climate change by readjusting sowing schedules, the report said.

The country is the largest manufacturer of tractors in the world, accounting for one-third of global production. Power tillers are also becoming popular in lowland flooded rice fields and hilly terrains. Steady growth is being observed in manually operated tools, animal operate implements and equipment operated by mechanical and electrical power sources, the report said.

Kashmir scientists clone first Pashima goat

Press Trust of India



Business Line The scientists of Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology with the first Pashmina cloned goat at the varsity campus. - Photo: Nissar Ahmad Srinagar, March 15:

In a first, scientists at Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology (SKUAST) have successfully cloned the first Pashmina goat.

The healthy female kid was born on March 9, using a foster mother and it took two years for standardisation of the technique, Director, Research of SKUAST, Mr Shafiq A Wani, said at a function here on Tuesday.

The Faculty of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry made the breakthrough under the leadership of Associate Professor, Centre of Animal Biotechnology, Mr Riaz Ahmad Shah,

assisted by a team of scientists including Mr Nazir A Ganai, Mr Hilal Musadiq, Mr Mujeeb Fazili, Mr F D Sheikh, Mr T A S Ganai along with Syed Hilal, Mr Maajid Hassan and Mr Firdous Khan as Research Associates.

Mr Shah was the key researcher in the team of scientists who earlier in 2009 gave the first cloned buffalo calf, "Garima" to the world using the same hand-made cloning technique while doing research at the National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal in Haryana, he said.

The programme called National Agricultural Innovation Project of ICAR was funded by the World Bank, Mr Wani said speaking at the inaugural session of a week-long training programme on "Reproductive technologies in sheep and goat".

The success of this technology would open up new vista in strategic and applied research which includes multiplication of elite animals of desired sex, stem cell technology for regenerative medicine, cloned animals as disease models, and conservation of threatened wild and domestic animal species, professor in-charge, Centre of Animal Biotechnology, Mr Nazir Ahmad Ganai said at the function.

The Vice Chancellor, SKUAST, Kashmir, Mr Tej Partap expressed hope that the technology would help to improve the lot of Pashmina goats, particularly in the frontier Ladakh region. to harness better income opportunities for the people