

Listen to radio and complete a course on millets



Farmer-friendly: Agriculture Minister S. Damodaran (second left) at the launch of farm school on millets at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in Coimbatore on Thursday. Vice-Chancellor K. Ramasamy (left) is in the picture.— Photo: M.Periasamy

Agriculture Minister S. Damodaran launched a farm school on All India Radio, which will start broadcasting a course from November 1. The farm school on “Nutritious Millets” will be broadcast every Thursday from 7.30 p.m. to 8 p.m. for 13 weeks. The course is being offered by Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

It is to provide awareness to farmers on cultivating millets. The course has been designed by TNAU and in addition to the programme on radio, course material will also be offered to the candidates who register for the course.

At the inauguration at TNAU on Thursday, Mr. Damodaran said the role of media was a critical one in reaching farm technologies to farmers.

“More than 90 per cent farmers in Tamil Nadu have only small and marginal holdings. But it is essential for these farmers also to learn about cultivating alternative crops other than rice and

sugarcane. The course on millets will benefit farmers in developing confidence and also cultivating millets using limited water,” the Minister said.

The Government was looking at setting up 28 community radio stations at a cost of Rs. 14 crore.

Also, the Chief Minister has sanctioned filling up of 504 agricultural officer posts, and 417 assistant agricultural officer posts, he added.

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of the university, said farming would turn remunerative only if farmers worked in a united manner.

Now they were not an organised lot and that is why the profits were less.

“Farmers should focus more on increasing the production of millets as there is going to be a high demand for millet-based food production in the future. India is slated to become the Diabetes Capital in some decades and hence millet-based food products will take the place of rice-based products. Also, it is essential for farmers to diversify into millets for farm security,” the Vice-Chancellor said.

Officials from TNAU and All India Radio spoke about the advantages of the farm school. It was mentioned that earlier farm schools of the university on radio had been successful.

After a break, the school on millets would begin from November.

Those interested could contact TNAU for registration and course material. After 13 radio classes and a contact class at TNAU, candidates would be issued course completion certificates.

Now, farmers are left at the mercy of northeast monsoon



With the storage in the Mettur Dam sufficient for delta irrigation for no more than a fortnight and the Karnataka government appearing determined to reject Tamil Nadu's demand for release of more water, the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association seems to have resigned itself to the fate.

The situation for raising samba crop has become very difficult, admits Mannargudi S. Ranganathan, general secretary of the association.

The total storage of the Mettur Dam at 4 p.m. on Thursday was 26.895 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet) against the total capacity of 93.4 tmcft.

If the discharge of about 12,000 cusecs is maintained (which is equivalent to one tmcft), it may not be possible to release water beyond October-end unless there is substantial inflow thanks to the northeast monsoon, according to PWD sources.)

He is extremely unhappy that the Cauvery Monitoring Committee has not bothered to come out with the accurate figures regarding the availability of water in the Karnataka reservoirs.

Even if the Karnataka reservoirs had 50 per cent storage, they should have a minimum of 50-60 tmcft and should share it with Tamil Nadu, he contends.

"Now we are totally dependent on the northeast monsoon expected to set in any time now. We have virtually become a rain-fed area now. Hence, it is extremely dicey to predict how much samba crop could be saved depending only on the monsoon," he adds.

Mr. Ranganathan says he is not prepared to go by the history of the northeast monsoon, which he believes is difficult to judge. "During October-December, there have been years when the delta had received as much as 700-800 mm rains. And during December alone, especially in the third week, it has rained to a level of 400 mm leading to flooding of the fields."

The only silver lining is that the northeast monsoon has been quite consistently supportive of Tamil Nadu unlike the southwest monsoon which has been playing truant on and off.

According to him, immediately after the media cautioned the farming community that the southwest monsoon is deficient, some farmers chose to go in for direct sowing in the first or

second week of August. “The condition of these crops is very good and they have not confronted much of weed problem as well.”

He estimates that direct sowing has been taken up at least in three lakh acres of which Tiruvarur district alone contributes two lakh acres.

About 1.5 lakh acres should have been covered by thaladi (the crop raised immediately after kuruvai) and this could also be saved because these areas have borewells and pumpsets. All that they require is adequate power.

An equal area could have been covered by the community nurseries and mechanically planted crop. However, I am not certain of the total area of samba which has been covered so far though we normally calculate it to be 16 lakh acres.”

Mr. Ranganathan expresses concern over the fate of the crops raised through nurseries as they would require a minimum of three centimetres of water. “This requires surface water and I am not sure whether that could be provided by rains”.

By October second week, transplanting for samba should have been over and the thaladi planting should be going on. But all these thumb rules have failed this year, he laments.

Pomegranate growers seek special package



Bacterial blight has wiped out pomegranate crop in various districts in the State. A file photo of a pomegranate orchard in Chitradurga district.

On the lines of Coffee Debt Relief Package, pomegranate growers have urged the Union government to announce a special package for them to overcome the financial distress caused by the bacterial blight disease that has wiped out crops in various districts of north Karnataka.

A delegation of Koppal district pomegranate growers, led by the former Minister and Congress MLA Amaregouda Bayyapur, called on Union Minister for Agriculture Sharad Pawar in New Delhi on Thursday and explained to him the plight of growers on account of crop loss due to bacterial blight disease.

In view of the crop loss, the delegation urged Mr. Pawar to waive crop loans borrowed by growers from cooperative institutions and nationalised banks in the State. In a memorandum submitted to the Minister, the delegation said that due to delay in extending the special debt relief package to pomegranate growers by the Union government, the growers have been resorting to various types of agitations such as road blocks and hunger strikes in Koppal and other districts.

The Union government implemented the Coffee Debt Relief Package in 2010 for small coffee growers with an implication of Rs. 241.33 crore.

R. Abdul Nayeem, president, Pomegranate Growers' Association, recently stated that growers were in dire straits due to crop loss. At the same time, financial institutions have issued legal notices to them for not repaying loans.

Pomegranate growers have been urging the government for the last two years to waive their loans. On account of drop in production, prices of pomegranate touched Rs. 150 a kg in Bangalore.

Focus on creating a healthy food regime

Agriculture K.P. Mohanan inaugurated the 'Thanima' mobile vans of the Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation Limited (Hortcorp) at the Kowdiar palace here on Wednesday.

The first sale was made to Aswathi Tirunal Gouri Lakshmi Bai, member of the royal family of erstwhile Travancore.

The vans would make available to city-dwellers pesticide-free, ethnic varieties of vegetables, a press release issued by HortiCorp said here.

The scheme intended to create a healthy food regime by promoting the sale of highly nutritious vegetables such as spinach and 'Muringa ila.'

This programme would also provide a means of livelihood to vegetable farmers from rural areas by promoting the cultivation of indigenous varieties.

The local produce from Wayanad, Idukki, and Palakkad districts would be procured, packed, and labelled by the Rural Agriculture Wholesale Market, Nedumangad.

Farmers to fight for fair prices for cash crops

The Federation of Independent Farmers' Associations (FIFA) has constituted a committee to go into the causes for the crash in the prices of commercial crops in the State and submit a report to the government.

Lok Satta Party president Jayaprakash Narayan, who also heads the federation said here on Thursday that while cost of production of commercial crops was increasing year after year, farmers were not able to recover their costs, leave alone remunerative prices. But consumers were forced to pay through their nose in the market.

Farmers want faulty paddy harvesters replaced

Paddy farmers from Vuchaguntapalem and some other villages demanded that the Agriculture Department take steps for replacing faulty and substandard Kubota paddy harvesters which were sold to them at an exorbitant price of Rs. 22 lakh while the actual price was Rs. 12 lakh.

Leaders of Balaji Rythu Mithra Group said about six harvesters were sold to several farmers' groups in March, 2010, when they were told about the high effectiveness of the machines. But it turned out that the harvesters were giving a lot of trouble and proved to be of little use.

Balaji Mitra Group leaders C. Varun and G. Panchala Reddy deplored that instead of making any profit, they incurred loss of over Rs. 12 lakh as they had to spend a lot on oil and repairs to

keep the machine running. They alleged that Kubota showroom owner, Gandhi Raju, functioning from his premises at Padugupadu, was not giving them proper advice or service.

Wet waste sent to farmers

Segregated wet waste from the outer zones is already being sent to the farmers' fields within a 100-km radius around the city. Apart from transporting the waste to the fields, the BBMP is also paying Rs. 66 per tonne to the farmers. Farmers may contact the BBMP and produce copies of Record of Rights, Tenancy and Crop Inspection. They may send their applications by email to [bbmpswmcompost @yahoo.com](mailto:bbmpswmcompost@yahoo.com) or call the control room (080-22221188) for details.

Will monsoon turn saviour of samba?

Storage in the Mettur Dam is sufficient for no more than a fortnight, say delta farmers



Seedlings being bundled before being transplanted for samba cultivation at a village in Thanjavur district.- PHOTO: M. SRINATH

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By October second week, transplanting for samba should have been over and the thaladi planting should be going on. But all these thumb rules have failed this year, he laments.

At this juncture, he calls for “effective water management and weed management” as that alone could save the crop and help get good yield.

Ban on GM field trials recommended

Citing India’s obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity — whose global conference is now underway here — a Supreme Court-appointed panel has recommended a ban on genetically modified (GM) field trials until the regulatory system is completely overhauled.

It also called for a ten-year moratorium on field trials of Bt food crops (which are modified with the *Bacillus thuringiensis* gene, such as the proposed Bt Brinjal), and a complete ban on field trials of transgenics in crops which originate in India.

Hearing a petition filed by civil society activist Aruna Rodrigues and others, the apex court constituted a five-member technical expert committee of reputed scientists earlier this year. The committee’s interim report, submitted earlier this month, deals with the issue of whether open field trials of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) should be allowed, and if so, what conditions should be imposed. the next hearing in the case is on October 29.

The CBD’s Cartagena Protocol — to which India is a signatory — aims to ensure the safe use of GMOs and cites the Rio Declaration’s precautionary principle: Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

In its interim report, the court-appointed panel cites this precautionary principle to insist that “it is incumbent upon the national regulatory process to incorporate steps to ensure that potential biosafety risks should be identified and minimised.” It then lists various shortcomings in the current regulatory process — including conflicts of interest among regulators, many of whom are GM scientists themselves, outsourcing and subcontracting trials in farmers’ fields, rather than in specific certified and monitored sites, and the lack of biosafety tests before open field trials.

“Keeping all these in view, the [committee] is unanimously of the view that all field trials should be stopped” until certain conditions rectifying these loopholes have been met, says the report.

The panel slams the current system, where one arm of the regulatory process is located within the department of biotechnology whose mandate is to promote the technology. “The regulatory body for GM products should be located entirely outside of the DBT, and a suggestion that it could be either in the Ministry of Environment and Forests or Ministry of Health or both,” says the report. This seems to overthrow the Prime Minister’s Scientific Advisory Council’s recommendations earlier this month in favour of the Biotechnology Regulatory Authority of India Bill.

The panel also echoed international negotiators at the Cartagena Protocol meeting here , who had called for socio-economic considerations to be taken into account in making decisions on GM crops. The report called for farmers’ representatives, sociologists and civil society to be included in the regulatory process.

The CBD delegates also discussed the danger of countries losing their native and traditional crop varieties due to GM, citing the South American example. India seems to have taken note. “India is a signatory to the Cartagena Protocol which recognises the crucial importance of biodiversity as a long-term resource. The [panel] accordingly recommends a ban on field trials of transgenics in those crops for which India is a centre of origin or a centre of diversity, as transgenics can contaminate and adversely affect the biodiversity,” said the report.

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Farmers stage demonstration

Farmers belonging to four villages in Sattupalli mandal staged a protest demonstration near JVR Open Cast Project in Sattupalli on Thursday demanding implementation of comprehensive Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) package towards the proposed acquisition of lands for the expansion of the project.

According to sources, the farmers from Kommepalli, Rejarla, Jaganadhapuram and Kistaram villages squatted on the main road at Kistapuram Y Junction.

A section of the protesters reportedly blocked the movement of vehicles carrying coal from the JVR OCP to various destinations for nearly one hour. The protesters demanded that the authorities ensure adequate compensation to the land oustees on the lines of the R&R packages being implemented in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh States.

The leaders of various political parties including the TDP, CPI, and CPI (M) expressed their solidarity with the agitating farmers.

The agitators called off the protest following the intervention of the authorities concerned.

Increase sought in cotton MSP

All opposition parties in the district will stage a protest on Friday to demand an increase in minimum support price for cotton. Activists of BJP, TDP, TRS, CPI, CPI (M) and farmers will gather at the agriculture market yard and take out a rally to the Collectorate. - Staff Reporter

Cashew forum to take part in global food fair

The Cashew Export Promotion Council of India (CEPCI), apex body of Indian cashew exporters and processors, is participating in the SIAL-2012 Food Fair to be held in Paris from October 21 to 25. A 30-member delegation led by the CEPCI chairman R. Hari Krishnan Nair will represent the CEPCI at the fair.

SIAL international food fair, one of the biggest food exhibitions of the world is a biennial event and this year around 5,900 exhibitors from 100 countries and 1,45,000 trade visitors from 200 countries will be participating. The show will have more than 200 seminars, talk shows and debates. The main objective of the CEPCI participation is to project Indian cashew as a health and wellness food with possibilities as a snack as well as a food ingredient. The CEPCI expects that the participation will provide fine opportunity for the members attending and exhibiting their products to get new business contacts.

The participants can interact directly with buyers and traders. The CEPCI will have its pavilion at the venue, with four members putting up their own stalls. CEPCI Joint Director Sree Rajmohan will be the council's official representative.

DC's plea to farmers

Assuring farmers that advance price for sugarcane supplied to sugar factories for the present season will be fixed soon, Mandya Deputy Commissioner B.N. Krishnaiah has requested them not to disturb the Dasara festivities. Farmers should cooperate and support the district administration to ensure smooth conduct of the festivities, he said.

KRRS leader K.S. Puttannaiah has warned of disrupting Mysore Dasara festivities if the State government failed to fix Rs. 2,500 a tonne as the advance price.

Crushing begins in sugar mill

Rural Industries Minister P. Mohan inaugurated the 16th seasonal crushing process in the Kachirapalayam-II cooperative sugar mill located in the Chinna Salem block on Thursday. The Minister symbolically fed sugarcane into the machinery to signify the inauguration of the crushing season. Mr. Mohan said for the current season, the mill would crush a total of 4.30 lakh tonnes of sugarcane.

He further said for the purpose, sugarcane area of 13,179 acres had been attached to the mill. During the previous financial year 2011-2012, the sugar mill earned a profit of Rs. 9.17 crore and this year 2012-2013 it might rake in a profit of Rs. 11 crore. The average recovery rate of sugarcane grown in the area was 9.45 per cent. Mohan further said for the 2010-2011 year, 22,000 members of the cooperative sugar mill were given a dividend of 14 per cent.

A sum of Rs. 1.86 crore would have to be given as the share to the State government and that will be handed over soon, he said.

Monsoon only hope for raising samba crop



With storage at Mettur Dam sufficient for delta for just a fortnight, the Cauvery Delta Farmers' Welfare Association looks resigned to fate

Rain improves storage level in reservoirs

Though it was just a marginal improvement in storage, Tuesday's showers have helped in pushing up water levels in reservoirs.

Total rainfall

The district recorded a total of 331.07 mm rainfall and the average was 27.59 mm.

The highest of 63.20 mm was recorded in Sulur and the lowest of 3.80 mm was recorded in Annur.

According to reports reaching the district headquarters, rainfall in mm recorded in the last 24 hours that ended at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday are as follows; Peelamedu Airport 30.80, Mettupalayam 16.20, Pollachi 19, TNAU 36.80, Chincona 20, Chinnakallar 12, Valparai PAP 46, Valparai Taluk office 66, Coimbatore South 17.27, Sholayar 61, Parambikulam 58, Aliyar 38.6, Thirumurthy 28, Amaravathy 14, Uppar 40, Bhavani 11.6, Thoonakadavu 23, Peruvuripallam 27, Upper Nirar 12, Vettaikaranpudur 33 and Makkinampatti 40.

Siruvani catchment recorded 20 mm rainfall and the reservoir caters to the drinking water needs of West Coimbatore and a number of wayside habitations.

Storage in reservoirs in ft (Full Reservoir Level in brackets): Shoalyar 154.58 (160), Parambikulam 37.17 (72), Aliyar 88.20 (120), Thirumurthy 47.10 (60), Amaravathy 47.67 (90).

Need to export goods of high market value stressed

The twin challenges facing India today are the need to feed the ever-growing population, and to export the agricultural produce to the world market, Helmut Weidlich, professor, Institut Prof. Dr. George Kurz GmbH, Germany, said here on Tuesday.

Speaking on "Agricultural Co-operatives – Way to Feeding the World" at the inauguration of the World Food Day events at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, he said food products that India could export were undervalued and therefore there was a need to export goods of high market value, especially those which were unique to India.

"This is possible through co-operatives, wherein producers, traders, scientists, and quality assurance personnel are brought together. The Netherlands is a good example where as a result of co-operative efforts the vegetables are produced according to required specifications of size, shape and nutrition, and are exported successfully. Though India is a home for Ayurveda and Siddha medicine, we have failed to take them to the world market," Mr. Weidlich said.

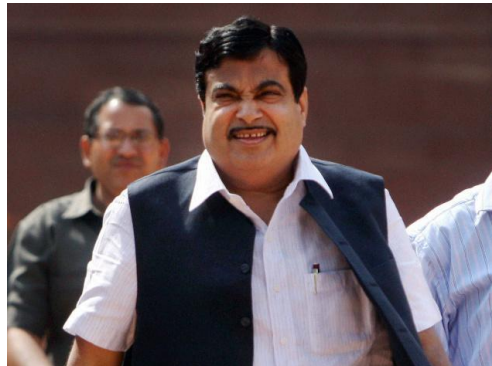
TNAU could contribute a lot in this area by way of providing a world-class food processing technology platform for scientists, farmers and traders to come together. It could also develop suitable marketing strategies for Indian food products.

K. Ramasamy, Vice-Chancellor of TNAU, said that there was a paradigm shift from food security to food assistance.

Though much inputs had been provided for farm mechanisation, there was a need to develop more varieties that were amenable for one time harvest, which would aid rapid mechanisation.

It is reported that by 2050 India would become the diabetes capital of the world and therefore we need to concentrate on developing new millet based food products that had more fibre content.

Farmer named by Kejriwal in Gadkari issue missing



Gajanan Ghatage, the farmer from Khursapar (Bela) village near Nagpur in Vidarbha, whom India Against Corruption (IAC) activist Arvind Kejriwal named in his press conference went missing on Thursday from his village.

“He has not come to home since yesterday” said Durga Ghatage, wife of Gajanan Ghatage.

But according to Sarathi Kamble, a Dalit farmer of Bela village whose 39-acre land was taken for the Vadgaon dam, said: “Gajanan was last seen with Samay Bansod and Nana Menjhokhe, both of them working in the Purti factory (the factory owned by BJP president Nitin Gadkari).”

Arvind Kejriwal accused that Nitin Gadkari’s NGO and factories were given agriculture land acquired for dam construction on lease instead of returning back the land to the farmers.

Gajanan Ghatage's brother Vishvanath Ghatage confirmed the allegations and expressed apprehension about his brothers wellbeing. "I don't know where he is and we are really concerned about him" said Mr. Vishvnath Ghatage."

On the land which was given on lease to Nitin Gadkari's company, Vishvanath Ghatage said, "yes it's true and that land belongs to us. Eighty seven acres of land of my family was acquired for the dam construction. We were given a meager Rs.5,000 per acre. But 17 acres was not utilised for the dam construction so that land should be returned to us. But in 2008, this land was leased out to Nitin Gadkari's company."

Mr. Vishvnath Ghatage says that he carries no ill will against Mr. Gadkari but asked "how can the irrigation department lease out our land without our permission."

According to Vishvanath Ghatage, there are four more families from Bela village whose land was acquired by the irrigation department but the unused land was leased out to Gadkari's company. Other farmers are Agrawal, Kashyap, Moreshwar and Anandrao Kamble and Madhavrao Bhagat.

Mr..Agrawal is dead, according to the villagers.

Mr. Kashayp, whose family stays in Nagpur city, could not be contacted but Kamble and Bhagat families are demanding their land back.

'Return back our land'

"Our 39-acre of land was acquired for the dam at the price of Rs.4, 000 per acre. Out of which around 24 acre was not used. But the land was never returned to our family "says Anandrao Kamble.

"All that land was used for Gadkari's company construction and we are landless now "says Sarathi Kamble , son of Moreshwer Kamble, who also works as the supervisor in Gadkari's factory near Bela "as a compensation for their acquired land."

According Sachin Bhagat, son of Madhavrao Bhagat, around nine acres of land belonging to Bhagat family was acquired for the dam construction but it was never used.

“The land is now under our control and we cultivate it but when we wanted to pay the land tax for it, we were told that the land has been leased out to the Purti Limited and they are paying the tax for it” said Mr. Sachin Bhagat.

When asked if he or his family was threatened or coerced to give up the land Mr. Sachin Bhagat said “no, such things haven’t happened but we have made many applications to the Irrigation department to return our land to us, but still they haven’t acted on it.”

But Mr. Vishvnath Ghatage says that some people from Purti Limited did come to acquire land owned by Gajanan and he resisted them.

Bhagat, Kamable and Ghatage families want their land returned back to them and are ready to pay the amount of compensation which was given to them when their land was acquired for the construction of dam.

“We thought that the dam will provide water facilities to the farmers of this area but it seems to have been built up for some vested interests and this is the reason we want our land back” said Mr. Vishvanath Ghatage.

Meeting to discuss advance price for sugarcane ends abruptly



An interaction programme which was convened here on Thursday to deliberate on fixing advance price for sugarcane ended abruptly as chaos prevailed after farmers owing allegiance to two factions of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS) hurled abuses at one another.

Representatives of farmers’ associations and sugar factories in the district and district officials had come for the meeting.

MLAs M. Srinivas, A.B. Ramesh Bandisidde Gowda and Kalpana Siddaraju, MLC Marithibbe Gowda, Mandya Deputy Commissioner B.N. Krishnaiah, Mandya Superintendent of Police Koushalendra Kumar, Mandya Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer P.C. Jayanna and officials of various departments and representatives of several sugar factories remained just mute spectators.

The district administration had convened the meeting at the Deputy Commissioner's office to discuss the advance price to be fixed for sugarcane supplied to sugar factories.

As soon as the meeting began, KRRS leader K.S. Puttannaiah started explaining the plight of sugarcane growers to the Deputy Commissioner and sugar factory representatives. However, Krishna Prakash, who is associated with another faction of the KRRS, too started speaking and requested the district administration to solve sugarcane growers' problems immediately.

Mr. Puttannaiah, who expressed his displeasure over Mr. Prakash interrupting him, instructed him to keep quiet. Immediately, Mr. Prakash's supporters raised their voice opposing Mr. Puttannaiah. There was chaos as farmers and their leaders of both the factions used unparliamentary language and tried to assault one another.

Sensing trouble, police personnel entered the meeting hall and attempted to pacify the supporters of both Mr. Puttannaiah and Mr. Prakash.

Officials and representatives of sugar factories left the meeting hall immediately.

Even after the meeting ended, supporters of these leaders were seen shouting at one another in the corridor for some time.

There is a severe dearth of farmhands



With a nearly four-fold increase in population since Independence, there is a lot of pressure on arable land, R. Dwarkinath, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, has said.

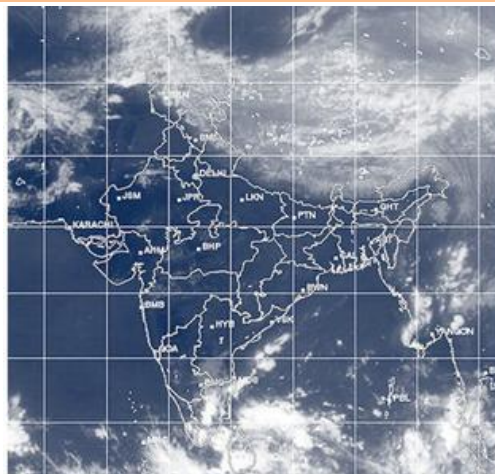
He was speaking at a function to mark World Food Day 2012, organised by the Institution of Agricultural Technologists, Department of Agriculture, UAS-Bangalore, and AME Foundation here on Thursday. The theme for this year is 'Agricultural cooperatives: key to feeding the world'.

Dr. Dwarkinath stated that while he was not too sure how agricultural cooperatives could contribute to food security, cooperatives could probably work in the field of group marketing for the benefit of farmers. He lamented that there was a severe dearth of farmhands, which was having a telling impact on agriculture.

The function also included talks by B.A. Mahadevappa, Additional Registrar of Cooperatives, and secretary of Karnataka State Cooperative Apex Bank; B.M. Shashidhara, professor, Department of Agricultural Marketing, Cooperation and Business Management, UAS; and Gundu Rao, corporate trainer.

A case study on the success of a primary agricultural credit cooperative society in Hirepadasalagi, Bagalkot district, in enhancing food production was presented by G.K. Deshpande, CEO of the society.

weather



The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st October.

Dry weather

Rain/snow has occurred at isolated places over Jammu and Kashmir. Weather was mainly dry over rest of the region.

TEMPERATURES :

MAXIMUM : The maximum temperatures changed little over the region. They were below normal in Jammu and Kashmir and normal in rest of the region. The highest maximum temperature in the region was 35.8°C recorded at Banda (Uttar Pradesh).

MINIIMUM : The minimum temperature fell in east Uttar Pradesh and changed little elsewhere. They were normal over the rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 12.5°C recorded at Nazibabad (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 20th OCTOBER 2012: Rain/snow may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir and north Himachal Pradesh . Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 20th OCTOBER 2012: Mainly clear sky.

Hindustan Times

TODAY FARM NEWS

19.10.2012 A.M

Weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Friday, Oct 19

Max Min

29.2° | 23.5°

Rain: 19.6

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:59

Sunset: 05:47

Barometer: 1012

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Saturday, Oct 20

Max Min

29° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Oct 21	Monday Oct 22	Tuesday Oct 23	Wednesday Oct 24	Thursday Oct 25
30° 23° Cloudy	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast	32° 25° Overcast	33° 25° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 61

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:24

Sunset: 05:47

Barometer: 1016



THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

18.10.2012 P.M

19.10.2012 A.M

19th oct 2012 P.M

Free-sale quota warning pulls down sugar



Sugar prices dropped further by Rs 20-30 a quintal at the Vashi spot market on Thursday on rising supply and poor local demand. The Union Government's warning to mills to sell non-levy quota of October-November in time or face consequences has dragged down the physical and futures markets. The free-sale quota for October-November is 40 lakh tonnes. *Naka* rates fell by Rs 30-40 for S-grade and by Rs 10-15 for M-grade. Mill tender rates slipped further by Rs 20-30 on need-based demand. Because of lower demand, fewer mills offered tenders on Wednesday evening, a wholesaler in Vashi said. The Navaratri demand is now almost over and Diwali buying is expected to rise from the first week of November. Demand from neighbouring States is still low in Maharashtra, forcing producers to sell in local markets. Stockists are not buying the market already has more than 10,000 bags in store currently. The Government may raise import duty on white sugar and scrap duty on raw-sugar imports in the next 10-15 days, Food Minister K.V. Thomas said on Thursday. "We have received different proposals as far as duty on sugar is considered. One is to increase duty on white sugar to 20 per cent and other is to scrap duty on raw sugar import," Thomas said. "We will take a final call after discussions with the Commerce Ministry, and then move a proposal to the Cabinet in 10-15 days," he said.

Import of both raw and white sugar attracts 10 per cent Customs duty, and sugar processed from imported raw sugar also attracts 10 per cent levy. There is a mismatch between the import tariffs on raw and white sugar, which needs to be corrected, a commodity observer said.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, November contracts were at Rs 3,324 (Rs 3,342), December Rs 3,295 (Rs 3,315) and January at Rs 3,331 (Rs 3,344) at noon.

In Vashi, 68-70 truckloads (each of 100 bags of a quintal each) arrived and 64-65 truckloads were despatched locally. On Wednesday evening, 10-12 mills offered tenders and sold merely 24,000-25,000 bags to local traders at Rs 3,380-3,430 (Rs 3,400-3,450) for S-grade and at Rs 3,440 - 3,530 (Rs 3,470-3,560) for M-grade.

Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates: S-grade Rs 3,512-3,571 (Rs 3,526-3,582) and M-grade Rs 3,582-3,702 (Rs 3,611-3,701).

Naka delivery rates: S-grade Rs 3,460-3,510 (Rs 3,500-3,540) and M-grade Rs 3,540-3,660 (Rs 3,550-3,660).

Rice remains flat amid tepid trading

Aromatic and non-basmati rice ruled flat on Thursday amid lukewarm trading.

Bulk buying was absent. Retail traders bought in limited quantities, as prices fell, said Tara Chand Sharma, proprietor of Tara Chand and Sons.

Prices have remained unchanged since Monday, and it's unlikely they will change in the next few days too, he added.

In the physical market, after witnessing a fall earlier on Monday, rice prices have been ruling unchanged since then.

Pusa-1121 (steam) sold at Rs 5,700 a quintal while Pusa-1121 (sela) sold at Rs 4,700-4,725 a quintal.

Pure basmati (raw) quoted at Rs 5,500 while pure basmati (sela) sold at Rs 4,600-4,600 a quintal. Duplicate basmati traded at Rs 4,600-4,700 a quintal.

PR-11 (sela) sold for Rs 2,450-2,500 while PR-11 (raw) quoted at Rs 2,400-2,500 a quintal. Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,070 a quintal while Permal (sela) sold at Rs 2,050 a quintal.

Sharbati (steam) quoted at Rs 3,800 while Sharbati (sela) quoted at Rs 3,700 a quintal.

Paddy Arrivals

Around 2.5 lakh bags of paddy varieties arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal. About 2 lakh bags of PR variety arrived and sold at Rs 1,230-1,285 a quintal; around 15,000 bags of Sharbati arrived and quoted at Rs 1,650-1,780 a quintal; just around 5,000 bags of Sugandha 999 arrived and sold at Rs 1,720-1,800 a quintal.

Around 25,000 bags of PR-14 arrived and sold at Rs 1,250-1,335 a quintal, while 2,000 bags of DB arrived and quoted at Rs 1,950-2,200. Two thousand bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and quoted at Rs 2,100-2,300 a quintal.

In Punjab, 27, 20,352 tonnes of paddy was procured by the government agencies and private millers till October 16.

Disclosures made in IPO draft papers legally binding: SEBI

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has clarified that disclosures in the IPO prospectus (on allotment of shares) has enforceability as in the case of a contract.

A prospectus is a document with legal validity and the company is legally bound to abide by the disclosures made therein as it forms the basis for raising money from the public, said SEBI.

SEBI, in an informal guidance on Rushil Décor's query on whether shares, other than minimum promoters' contribution of 20 per cent, can be released for transfer on the expiry of one year from the date of allotment clarified that it cannot be done.

SEBI said that in Rushil's case, the company had specified in the prospectus that the entire pre-issue share capital of the company, other than minimum promoters' contribution, shall be locked-in for a period of one year from the date of commencement of commercial production or date of allotment, whichever was later. This was akin to the lock-in clause applicable to minimum promoters' contribution, said SEBI. SEBI regulations prescribe a three-year lock-in for

minimum promoter contribution from the letter date of issue of allotment and date of commencement of commercial production. Promoter holding in excess of minimum contribution has a one-year lock-in and the entire pre-issue non-promoter holding in an IPO also has a one-year lock-in.

Tight supplies lift edible oils

Edible oils extended gains on tight supply on Thursday. Improved local demand ahead of Dussehra pushed up groundnut, sunflower and rapeseed oils by Rs 5 for 10 kg each. Cottonseed refined oil increased by Rs 2 for 10 kg, while imported soyabean oil and palmolein edged up by Rs 5 and Rs 2 each tracking firm futures. Stockists bought palmolein for forward delivery, while volume in the ready market remained subdued. Higher closing of Malaysian palm oil futures pushed up the sentiment in the physical market, said market sources.

Malaysian palm oil futures climbed on Thursday on emerging concerns of floods in key growing regions curbing output and a slew of economic data from the US and China that showed global growth trends were intact. Palm oil futures, which have lost 21 per cent so far this year, also gained support from short covering ahead of an Islamic holiday next week.

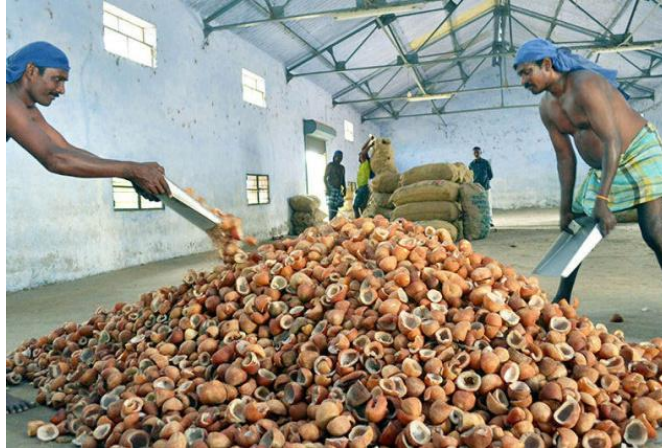
Sources said firm reports from Malaysia encouraged local bulk inventory buying for Dussehra and Diwali festivals. Traders expect higher demand for cheaper edible oils such as cotton, soya and palmolein. Arrivals of cotton, groundnut and soyabean in producing States are expected to rise sharply after Dussehra.

Liberty sold 350-400 tonnes of palmolein at Rs 515-517 for delivery between October 20 and November 20. Ruchi sold 40-50 tonnes at Rs 515 for November and Allana sold 60-70 tonnes at Rs 518. Another 80-100 tonnes of palmolein were traded in the resale market at Rs 517-518 for ready delivery. In Saurashtra and Rajkot, groundnut oil was at Rs 1,725 (Rs 1,720) for a *telia* tin and at Rs 1,125 (Rs 1,120) for loose (10 kg).

At the end of the day, Liberty quoted palmolein at Rs 517-520 and super palmolein at Rs 578 for delivery between October 20 and November 20, and soya refined oil at Rs 665 for November 20. Ruchi quoted palmolein at Rs 515 for November, super palmolein at Rs 576 for November, soya refined oil at Rs 665 for October-November and sunflower refined oil at Rs 710 for October-November. Allana palmolein at Rs 520 and super palmolein at Rs 575.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange, soyabean refined oil's November contracts jumped by Rs 16.35 to Rs 668.70 and December by Rs 16.55 to Rs 668.

Copra, coconut oil futures to resume tomorrow



Kochi-based First Commodities Exchange of India Ltd is all set to re-start futures trading in coconut oil and copra from October 20.

The Forward Markets Commission had allowed the company, a subsidiary of Cochin Oil Merchants Association, to launch forward trading in the commodities from June 1 to May 31, 2013.

Association and company Vice-President Prakash B.Rao told *Business Line* that the exchange would be starting a contracts for November, December, January and February. All contracts will have a minimum ticket size of one tonne and its multiples thereof.

The exchange expects an average transaction of 100-250 tonnes daily through its online platform. The commodities plans to contracts each for the 12 months, he said.

The delivery point will be within a radius of 80 km from Kochi. He said that the company has set up a 13,000 sq ft storage facility on its premises at Vazhakkulam near Aluva.

On complaints regarding trading, Rao said, "We have set up an arbitration committee to deal with any disputes related to delivery, quality or on any aspect of trading. The board members of the exchange will chalk out further course of action based on the complaints."

According to Rao, First Commodities had started futures trading in coconut oil in 2001, which continued till May 31. However, due to some technical and legal issues it discontinued trading.

The company is expecting better participation from traders, growers and exporters, as they can hedge their positions. To ensure more participation, he said, there are plans to conduct awareness programmes in various parts of the South.

First Commodities also plans to start futures trading in rubber and oil cakes shortly, he said.

Export demand pushes up jeera



New export demand lifted jeera futures by 1.7 per cent a quintal and by Rs 40 for 20 kg in the spot market on Thursday.

At Unjha mandi of Gujarat, jeera traded higher by Rs 20 to Rs 2,475-2,575 for 20 kg for medium quality. NCDEX quality (raw) quoted at Rs 2,735-2,835 for 20 kg. while 4,000-4,500 bags arrived, 6,000-7,000 bags were traded.

On the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX), jeera November contract increased by Rs 235 to Rs 15,637.50 a quintal, with an open interest of 14,127 lots, while December contract gained Rs 267.50 at Rs 16,040, with 11,472 lots.

Indian jeera is in high demand globally, as crops in Turkey and Syria are small and its quality is good, said a trader in Rajkot.

According to a commodity analyst, jeera prices are projected to trade on positive note on extended fresh buying supported by spot demand from stockists. Rise in export demand for Indian jeera ahead of upcoming festival season might help jeera prices recover further.

Reports of revival of unrest in Syria and Turkey and demand for upcoming festive season has boosted export market sentiment, resulting in higher domestic jeera prices.

Trade clueless as dip continues in turmeric



Spot turmeric unexpectedly slid by Rs 300 a quintal on Thursday here. Traders here haven't yet received any orders from North India, possibly because they already have huge stocks. Hybrid turmeric fell by Rs 750 a quintal because of poor quality. "We don't know why prices have fallen so much. Only few days more for the Durga Pooja, but still no fresh orders have come from North India. In other markets also sales were poor," said Erode Turmeric Merchants Association President R.K.V. Ravishankar.

He said this was the first time he was seeing turmeric sales dropping to such lows. He said that prices in Nizamabad and Sangli are also low.

Senniappa Gounder, a farmer in his eighties, said: "I have never seen such poor sales. Last year, more than 4,000 bags were sold for a maximum price of Rs 5,789 a quintal on the corresponding day. But this year only, 1,300 bags arrived, of which only half was sold."

Traders said they are not buying due to poor countrywide demand, so the farmers also brought fewer bags to the auction centre.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 3,811-5,329 a quintal, the root variety at Rs 3,678-4,677.

Salem hybrid crop: The finger variety was sold at Rs 5,020-5,554, the root variety at Rs 4,614-5,239. Of the 468 bags that arrived, only 72 were sold.

At the Regulated Marketing committee, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,219-5,349, the root variety at Rs 4,089-5,169. All the 350 bags kept for sale found takers.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 5,158-6,018, the root variety at Rs 4,899-5,219. Of the 489 bags put up for sale, 441 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 4,600-5,859, the root variety Rs 3,872-5,219. All the 44 bags kept for sale were sold.

Pepper maintains upward momentum

Pepper market continued to head north on buying interest shown by a bulls cartel on Thursday. That in turn pushed the active contracts substantially up except October, which is maturing on Saturday.

Nearly 2,400 tonnes of October contract have been marked for delivery under the staggered delivery system and the cartel is expected to take delivery. Agents of the cartel were on a buying spree in the primary markets where the sellers seeing the frantic buyers withdrew from the market, trade sources told *Business Line*.

Bull strategy

The strategy of the cartel is said to be to squeeze the availability in the primary market with the stockists and the growers so that the investors would not get the material from there for processing and depositing in the exchange.

The domestic demand is reportedly met by supplies from Karnataka at Rs 402 and 403 a kg delivered anywhere in India, they said.

The current price situation might land in trouble several importers who had brought in material cheap from other origins in May, June, July and sold in the local market hoping that they could cover from here and re-export after value-addition. They may have to cover from the cartel which is holding now an estimated 5,400 tonnes of black pepper.

October contract on the NCDEX declined by Rs 20 to the last traded price (LTP) of Rs 43,010 a quintal. November and December increased by Rs 410 and Rs 700 a quintal to the LTP of Rs 43,265 and Rs 42,800 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover decreased by 43 tonnes to close at 1,671 tonnes. Total open interest fell by 510 tonnes to 7,808 tonnes.

Oct and Nov open interest dropped by 535 tonnes and 112 tonnes respectively to close at 663 tonnes and 4,294 tonnes while that of Dec went up by 117 tonnes to 1,677 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend increased by Rs 200 to close at Rs 40,300 (ungarbled) and Rs 41,800 (garbled) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$8,550 a tonne (c&f) for Europe and \$8,850 a tonne (c&f) for the US.

Sugar futures lower on ample supplies

Sugar futures on the NCDEX continued its downtrend on Thursday. Sugar for November delivery was down 0.63 per cent at Rs 3,321 a quintal at 1:45 pm on the NCDEX. An increase in supply has kept prices under check despite demand peaking in the last few days on the back of festival celebration.

With the cane crushing season set to begin next month, prices may remain low, feel analysts. The below-normal rainfall in key sugarcane growing regions is expected to pull down sugar output to 24 million tonnes this year against 25 million tonnes registered last year.

Tea immersion programme' in India

The US-based 'World Tea Tours', leaders in tea adventure travel, has announced a 'Tea Immersion Programme' in India.

"This programme will bring tea connoisseurs from different parts of the world, who are passionate to learn about Indian tea culture and provide a platform for intensive interaction", Dan Robertson, Director, World Tea Tours of the US, told *Business Line*.

"The programme entails a week-long stay on plantations when visitors experience the real 'rugged' life of a planter. They gain opportunity to learn history, culture, production, tasting, trade and research. In short, it gives them hands-on experience about tea cultivation, manufacture and trade", said Dan Robertson who had served as judge in international tea competitions.

"We will have such 'immersion programme' in tea estates in Assam, Darjeeling and the Nilgiris.

This follows the present 'Tea Tour of India' in these regions. We have visited tea estates and interacted with Tea Board officials, brokers and researchers", he said after honouring the Bluegate Beverages Director, G. Udayakumar, who co-ordinated the Tea Tour in Nilgiris, with 'certificate of appreciation'.

"In the Nilgiris, the team comprising delegates from the US, Canada, Germany and France visited tea majors, Glendale, Chamraj, Coonoor Tea and Bluegate Beverages' Avataa Billimalai. They saw plantations, factories, labour quarters, hospitals, schools, recreation centres, crèches and temples on the estate which cater to the needs of labour. They have assured to promote Nilgiri tea back home. The team was enamoured of the multi-brew speciality Nilgiri teas and the tea cuisine we served", Udayakumar said.

Maharashtra dairies plan to halt collecting milk on Oct 26, 27



Cooperative and private dairies in Maharashtra are likely to stop collecting milk from farmers across the State on October 26 and 27, in order to pressurise the State Government to accede to their long standing demand.

Farmers would be left holding around two crore litres of unsold milk.

These dairies are demanding subsidy for the production of skimmed milk powder (SMP) as prices in the international market have crashed. They also want the dairy business to be recognised as part of the agriculture sector, so that it can get additional subsidies from the Centre as well as the State Government.

Dairies in the State process about one crore litres of milk a day, of which about 70 lakh litres gets sold in the retail market, and another 15 lakh litres is used to make paneer and other milk products, while the rest is used for making SMP.

Due to the low demand in the international market, about 15,000 tonnes of milk powder is piled up across State warehouses.

The Managing Director of Gokul Dairy, D. Ghanekar, told *Business Line* that in the last two years, the price of SMP has dipped from \$3,500 to \$2,100 a tonne in the international market. But the operational cost of procuring milk and making SMP continues to increase.

He said he had urged the Centre and State Governments to procure SMP as a market intervention measure and to give it away as food-aid to needy countries. "In a way, the dairy sector needs a bailout package of about Rs 500 crore from the government. In comparison to the other bailout packages, our demand is in miniscule," Ghanekar said. A senior Maharashtra Government official said that if dairies stopped procuring milk, it would affect small and marginal farmers, who have already lost some crops given the uncertain rains. "It could create a law and order situation in the villages and affect the whole State," the official said.

The Chairman of Warna Dairy, Vinay Kore, said that a body such as the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB) must procure the existing SMP inventory, pool it together, and then try and sell it in the international market.

He added that NDDB must also look at the feasibility of exporting it to the US.

Spot rubber prices gain as rain hits supply



Physical rubber prices improved on Thursday. Widespread South-West monsoon rains especially overnight rains affected the tapping in major plantation areas creating fears on further dip in arrivals and production.

Sellers stayed back expecting a moderate recovery in prices while the sentiments were also catalysed by a firm trend in domestic futures on early trades.

Sheet rubber improved to Rs 186.00 (Rs 184.00) a kg, according to traders. The grade finished firm at Rs 185.00 (Rs 184.00) a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, as quoted by the Rubber Board.

November contracts slipped to Rs 183.80 (Rs 184.70), December to Rs 184.01 (Rs 185.67) and January to Rs 185.14 (Rs 187.15) while the February series increased to Rs 187.96 (Rs 187.86) and March to Rs 190.95 (Rs 190.04) a kg on the National Multi Commodity Exchange (NMCE).

RSS 3 (spot) firmed up to Rs 169.70 (Rs 168.81) a kg at Bangkok. The October futures increased to ¥ 256.8 (Rs 171.92) from ¥ 253.0 during the day session but then remained inactive in the night session on Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM).

Spot prices (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 186.00 (184.00); RSS-5: 178.00 (176.00); Ungraded: 171.00 (169.00); ISNR 20: 165.00 (163.00) and Latex 60%: 120.00 (119.00).

Invest in seed technology to boost farm income



Investing in seed technology is the best that farmers in the country's predominantly rainfed areas can be given to boost their incomes and combat effects of global climate change, according to K.C. Bansal, Director of the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR).

"There is no better technology than seed for rainfed agriculture, which accounts for 40 per cent of our crops and 50 per cent of our farm workforce. And that is why we are working towards identifying genetic resources for rainfed agriculture", he said at a panel discussion on Agriculture and Technology, organised by IndoAsiancommodities.com, here.

Speaking on the occasion, Vibha Ahuja, General Manager, Biotech Consortium of India Ltd, said that the current long-drawn regulatory processes were an impediment to the spread of technology.

Bemoaning the restrictions on field trials of genetically modified crops in many States, she said that while civil society groups may be against these varieties, they are not the only stakeholders.

"Think of the farmers who are waiting for new technologies", she added.

Coconut replanting drive in Kerala

Coconut Development Board has released Rs 2.5 crore to the beneficiaries of replanting and rejuvenation programme in Kollam and Thiruvanthapuram districts towards the eligible subsidy for cutting and removal of disease advanced senile and unproductive palms.

Those who have submitted claims up to September 4, 2012 may contact their respective banks and confirm credit.

Those who have not provided the correct account details, the payment will be made by the way of cheques to the respective Krishi Bhavans.

The board in association with Agriculture Department is implementing a pilot project in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Thrissur districts.

Rubber Board to observe vigilance awareness week

The Rubber Board will observe Vigilance Awareness Week in its offices from October 29 to November 3.

This year, the theme is 'Transparency in Public Procurement.'

As a part of the programme, elocution competitions will be conducted for the employees of the Rubber Board in the central zone and for students from high schools, higher secondary schools and colleges in and around Kottayam, on anti- corruption subjects, at the Rubber Board Head Office.

Details of schedules and subjects for students can be had from the board office.

Malaysia seeks to buy Indian wheat on long term



Malaysia has sought to import wheat from India on a long-term basis through diplomatic channel.

The Malaysian Agriculture Minister, Noh Bin Omar, explored the possibility of wheat imports from India with the Food Minister, K.V. Thomas, on Thursday.

Malaysia has been importing wheat from India, but in small quantities and mainly through the private trade.

Long-term basis

“They are keen to import wheat on a long-term basis. We have asked them to send a technical team to check the quality. Once they decide, we can take it forward,” Thomas told reporters.

The Food Minister said such exports would be from the central pool stocks.

Wheat exports from India have picked up on rising demand amid squeeze in global supplies.

So far, the total exports under open general licence have touched 6.3 million tonnes, he said. India had produced an all-time high of 93.9 mt last year.

Malaysia is one of India’s large trading partners.

The trade balance is currently in favour of Malaysia from which India is expected to import over two million tonnes of palm oil and other products.

Govt may scrap duty on raw sugar imports



A clear divide has emerged between the mills in Uttar Pradesh and those in Maharashtra and Karnataka over allowing duty-free imports of raw sugar.

This comes even as the Union Food Minister, K.V.Thomas, on Thursday told reporters that the Government had received proposals to scrap import duty on raw sugar and double the same on whites to 20 per cent.

While he did not say from where the proposal came, it is understood that there was pressure mainly from the cane-starved Maharashtra and Karnataka mills.

Deficient South-West monsoon rains this time are expected to affect cane supplies in Maharashtra and Karnataka, leading to their mills clamouring for duty-free raw sugar imports to enable running to full capacity.

bumper crop in UP

Uttar Pradesh, by contrast, is seen harvesting a bumper crop, which gives mills there sufficient cane to crush in the current season, starting October.

“We have urged our Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav to write to the Prime Minister to increase import duty on raw sugar from the existing 10-20 per cent and the same on whites from 10-30 per cent,” said S.L. Gupta, Secretary of UP Sugar Mills Association.

different proposals

“We have received different proposals. One is to increase duty on white sugar imports to 20 per cent and another to scrap duty on raw sugar imports.

“We will discuss the issue with the Agriculture and Commerce Ministries and take it to the Cabinet in about 15 days” Thomas said.

The proposed duty rationalisation come just as crushing operations for 2012-13 season have begun in Karnataka and will take off in Maharashtra and UP after Diwali in the first week of November.

“Duty-free imports will create havoc and our industry will be totally crushed. If imports are allowed when there is surplus sugar, prices will crash to below Rs 3,000 a quintal,” said Gupta.

inventories

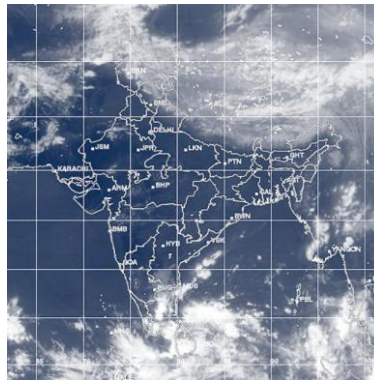
The sugar balance at the start of season is about six million tonnes and the estimated production for the year is pegged at 24 mt.

With an estimated consumption of 22-23 mt, there will be a surplus of 7 mt, Gupta said, arguing that imports were unwarranted.

However, Maharashtra has urged the Union Government to abolish duty on raw sugar imports.

Making a pitch for imports, Maharashtra Co-operation Minister Harshvardhan Patil had earlier argued that it would help sugar mills tide over cane shortage and ensure stability in prices of the sweetener.

Conditions favourable for onset of North-East monsoon



The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has declared that the South-West monsoon has withdrawn from the entire country on Thursday. But it stopped short of announcing the onset of the North-East monsoon, although thundershowers have been reported from many parts of Tamil Nadu and Kerala during the 24 hours ending in the morning.

CONDITIONS FAVOURABLE

The IMD said that conditions continued to remain favourable for commencement of the North-East monsoon over Tamil Nadu, Kerala and adjoining areas of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on Friday. Satellite imagery showed convective (rain-bearing) clouds rising over south Tamil Nadu, South Andaman Sea, South-West Bay of Bengal, Comorin area and South-East Arabian Sea.

A rain warning for the next two days said that heavy rainfall would occur at one or two places over Tamil Nadu and Kerala. An extended outlook for the next seven days said that thundershowers would continue to break out at many places over extreme south peninsular India.

HEAVY FALLS

Heavy falls have been indicated at one or two places over coastal Tamil Nadu during this period. A US-based storm tracker said that the heavy rain regime to the west of Sri Lanka and around the Comorin region would propel along the South-West coast of India over the next few days.

Normally, the rain-head should travel west into open Arabian Sea, but the forecast suggests it would careen north along the west coast.

This could possibly be because of the westerly winds from the opposite side associated with a passing western disturbance.

If this were to hold true, the west coast might be able to witness a wet spell over the next few days.

Meanwhile in the north, minimum temperatures have risen above normal by 2 to 4 deg Celsius with a warmth-building western disturbance dropping anchor. But they are below normal by the same margin in areas far to the south including north interior Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.