

Indo-U.K. joint workshop on plant molecular farming

COIMBATORE, February 12, 2014 - An Indo-U.K. joint workshop on 'Plant Molecular Farming' will be held at Bharathiar University to provide hands-on training to participants in this field of research, here on March 13 and 14.

According to a release, the workshop is being held by the Plant Genetic Engineering Laboratory and funded by the U.K. – India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI). The objective of the workshop is to demonstrate the importance of plant expression system as an alternative system for the production of very valuable and complex therapeutics. Julian Ma, scientist and collaborator of the ongoing project from St. George's University of London, will deliver the plenary lecture. Experts from Indian vaccine industries will also be present to speak at the workshop. The Indian collaborator and Principal Investigator of the project is R. Sathishkumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Biotechnology, Bharathiar University.

For details and registration, visit www.b-u.ac.in.

Entry

Entry is free and the last date for receipt of filled in application is February 20.

Experts from Indian vaccine industries to speak at the workshop

271 Crop Groups formed to train farmers: Collector



Aims at improving shelf life of farm produce

Collector K. Vivekanandan (third left) at the exhibition held at the Collectorate in Dharmapuri on Tuesday. -Photo: Special Arrangement.

DHARMAPURI, February 12, 2014 - As many as 217 'Crop Groups' were formed in Dharmapuri district for giving post-harvest training to farmers on improving

the shelf life of the farm produce, said Collector K. Vivekanandan here on Tuesday.

He was speaking after inaugurating the exhibition and seminar on Agriculture Marketing, Agriculture Engineering, NABARD Bank and Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) at the Collectorate.

Mr. Vivekanandan said that the district administration is taking various steps including setting up of such expert groups through Agriculture Marketing and Commerce department to improve the profitability of the farmers. This will avoid the interference of intermediaries in buying and selling of agriculture produce in the district.

The Crop Groups include those for mango, banana, tomato, drumstick, ragi, samai, maize, gingili, water melon etc.

The Crop Groups would give post-harvest training to farmers through field-level training on avoiding crop damage so that there is 30 to 35 per cent more revenue for the farmers.

Apart from these, the farmers are also provided necessary information through SMS and other media such as newspapers.

Efforts were being taken to sell gingili, samai, tamarind and cotton brought by the farmers to Regulated Markets in Dharmapuri, Pennagaram and Harur through auction thus avoiding mediators, Mr. Vivekanandan said.

Cold storage exclusively for tamarind with a capacity to store up to 1000 mt, and also another cold storage to store up to 25 mt of farm produce at a cost of Rs. 2-crore have been constructed in Dharmapuri. A 50 m.t. capacity cold storage and a commercial complex at a cost of Rs. 1-crore was constructed in Palacode for sale of tomato.

With a view to give further impetus to the vision of Chief Minister Jayalalithaa in doubling the agriculture production and increasing the income of farmers , Agriculture Week is being organised in the district from February 10 to 17.

3206 farmers were given agriculture equipment at a cost of Rs. 1.63-crore and 37 Hindu Adi Dravidar farmers were also given agriculture equipments costing Rs. 15 lakhs, Mr.

Vivekanandan adds.

P. Dillibabu, Harur MLA., District Revenue Officer P. Ramar among others participated.

Save standing crop, say Cumbum farmers

They stage road roko on Cumbum-Theni Highway

THENI, February 12, 2014 - More than 300 farmers laid siege to the Uthamapalayam Public Works Department (PWD) office and later staged a road roko on Cumbum-Theni Highway at Uthamapalayam on Tuesday demanding the release of water from Mullai Periyar dam to protect standing crop in Cumbum Valley.

Paddy growers in Uthamapalayam, Chinnamanur, Margaiyankottai and Royappanpatti thronged the PWD office on Tuesday morning.

Later, a section of the farmers with paddy crop in their hands blocked the Theni-Cumbum Highway pressing for the same demand. Traffic was disrupted for an hour.

Revenue and police officials assured them that the matter would be taken to the knowledge of the government.

“The standing crop was at milking stage and the shortage of water for irrigation will ultimately affect yield. If no water is provided, we will harvest only chaff instead of grains,” they stated.

However, PWD officials said that storage level was abysmally low in Periyar dam and it stood at 110 feet. “If we release water for irrigation, the entire district will face acute drinking water crisis. The present storage will not be enough to fulfil the drinking water needs of urban and rural local bodies till the next rainy season. We are unable to take any decision now. We will brief the government regarding the situation and suitable action will be taken in this connection,” they added.

A section of the farmers in Cumbum had blocked the Kumuli Highway demanding water for irrigation on Monday.

☞ Farmers say the standing crop was at milking stage and shortage of water will affect yield

☞ PWD officials say storage level was abysmally low in Periyar dam and it stood at 110 feet

Farmers badly in need of water to save crop

Around 1, 800 acres of paddy in flowering and milky stages



Question of Survival: A view of the paddy field at Korampallam in Tuticorin on Tuesday.— Photo: N. Rajesh

TUTICORIN, February 12, 2014 - Farmers are desperately in need of the Tamirabharani water to save standing paddy crop.

To safeguard the livelihoods of paddy farmers, water is required to irrigate

paddy fields, according to K.P. Perumal, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam. At this critical stage, the farmers were looking forward to get water for irrigation at least in two spells. The standing paddy crop had attained ear head emergence and milky stage and hence water is the need of the hour. The northeast monsoon failure had already dashed the hopes of farmers this year also, who were now largely dependent on irrigated farming. On the wetland ayacut, paddy cultivation was normally taken up on 18,000 to 20,000 acres. "The entire district has 46, 000 acres of ayacut covered under irrigation system. Apart from paddy, the farmers are also pinning their hopes on banana cultivation," he said here on Tuesday. Fifteen to thirty quintals of paddy yield could be got if sufficient water was released to irrigate the paddy fields, he added.

Farmers in the tail-end regions in Korampallam were bearing the brunt of inaccessibility to water.

N.K. Dhakshinamoorthy, Joint Director of Agriculture, Tuticorin, told 'The Hindu' that to avoid moisture stress and ensure better yield of paddy, water resources were essentially required especially at the tail-end regions at this stage. About 1, 500 acres to 1, 800 acres of paddy crop were in flowering and milky stages in the tail-end regions in Korampallam, Mr. Dhakshinamoorthy said.

Four blocks including Alwarthirunagari, Karungulam, Tiruchendur, Srivaikuntam and some parts of Pudukottai had been identified as potential irrigation pockets in the district. Cultivation of paddy, millets and rice fallow pulses would be taken up under State-sponsored summer programme after 'pisanam' season. Under the summer package of food grain mission, paddy cultivation is expected to cover 2, 500 ha, millets on 4, 500 ha and rice fallow pulses on 12, 500 ha. Soil with residual moisture would be conducive to raise these crops.

The officials from Department of Agriculture had been streamlining activities to achieve the objective of good yield of produce, hopefully. The farmers in these identified blocks would be trained on suitable methods of cultivation and better management practices to achieve the desired results, the Joint Director said.

Farmers block traffic on highway

VILLUPURAM, February 12, 2014 - The farmers who brought agricultural produce like paddy and horse-gram got agitated when they found the gates of the regulated market committee at Ulundurpet locked on Monday night.

They had brought the commodities by various modes of transport.

As they could not take the vehicles into the premises and unload the bags they squatted in front of the market on the Chennai — Tiruchi Highway blocking traffic for about an hour. The official sources said that since the premises was already overflowing with unsold or unlifted contracted commodities fresh arrivals could not be accommodated. Therefore, as a precautionary measure they had kept the gates of the regulated market committee closed. However, on police intervention and assurance that the farmers would be facilitated to offload the produce they gave up their stir.

Farmers on forest fringes to get 50 p.c. subsidy for solar fencing

Cattle-proof trenches to be dug along forest boundaries



B. Ramanath Rai

BANGALORE, February 12, 2014 Farmers on the fringes of forests will get 50 per cent subsidy to install solar-powered fencing for their farmland, Minister for Forest, Ecology and Environment B. Ramanath Rai said on Tuesday.

He told presspersons here that solar fencing could be an effective means to prevent wild animals from straying into farmland and damaging standing crops. Thus man-animal conflict could be averted to an extent, the Minister said. He said the department was doing its best to protect wild animals on one hand and

human habitats on the other.

While the department had been undertaking this project on its own for farmland and had set aside Rs. 55 crore for it, many farmers were not satisfied with the project. Hence the department had decided to provide farmers subsidy for installing solar fencing, the Minister said.

Another move to protect forest and wildlife was to dig cattle-proof trenches along the periphery of wildlife sanctuaries, national parks and reserve forests. The department would go ahead with this plan so as to secure the boundaries of protected forests as well as prevent wild animals from straying into human habitats, the Minister said. This would also help the department in clearing encroachments on forestland and knowing the boundaries of forests, Mr. Rai said.

The Forest Department was also planning to swap “dry” forestland, which do not have any vegetation, with Revenue Department land that had vegetation, he said.

The Forest Department was concerned about the Union government’s directive to expand forest cover from 22 per cent to 33 per cent, Mr. Rai said, and added that the plan to swap land with the Revenue Department was a step towards expanding the forest cover.

On clearing encroachments on Inam land around Kalasa in Mudigere taluk of Chikmagalur district, Mr. Rai said the department had been adhering to the Karnataka High Court order. Efforts would, however, be made to protect the interests of small and marginal farmers, he said.

☑ ***Fencing will help avert man-animal conflict to an extent, says Minister***

☑ ***Department to swap dry forestland with Revenue Department land that has vegetation***

Helpline launched for cattle farmers

BANGALORE, February 12, 2014 - An exclusive helpline for cattle farmers was launched here on Tuesday in a bid to provide medical services, counselling and information on various veterinary schemes on call. The helpline is being taken up on a pilot basis in four districts, Bangalore Rural, Mysore, Belgaum and Gulbarga.

The facility, which has been launched under the Central scheme of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, is set to be extended to the entire State in three months, according to senior officials of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Sciences Department. — Special Correspondent

Farmers seek fair price for farm produce

BIDAR, February 12, 2014 - Members of the Akhil Bharat Kisan Sabha and Dr. Ambedkar Horata Samiti took out a rally here on Tuesday, demanding a fair price for farm produce and various other facilities to farmers.

Their demands included pension to farmers and a ban on acquisition of farmland for non agricultural purposes. They opposed the Union government's plan to acquire over 12,000 acres of land for setting up National Investment and Manufacturing Zone in Bidar and Bhalki taluks. They sought strict enforcement of rules against atrocities on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The farmers complained against the sugar factories in the district, who, they said, were unwilling to pay the Rs. 2,650 a tonne for sugarcane, as fixed by the State government.

PM to decide on farmers' demands after Ministry report



They insist on imposing duty on imported red gram and pulses

DISSEMINATING INFORMATION: President of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha Maruti Manpade addressing a press conference in Gulbarga on Tuesday. — PHOTO: ARUN KULKARNI

GULBARGA, February 12, 2014 - Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has assured the delegation, comprising representatives of different farmers' organisations, that he would consider its demand for imposing a duty on imported pulses and sugar after calling for a report from the Agriculture Ministry.

Dr. Singh told the delegation, led by Basudev Acharya, chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture, on February 7 that all the issues raised by farmers' organisations in support of their demand for imposing a 30 per cent duty on imported pulses and increasing the duty on imported sugar from the present 15 per cent to 40 per

cent, would be considered after obtaining a report from Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on whether there was a need to impose import duty.

President of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha Maruti Manpade, president of the Karnataka Red Gram Growers' Association Basavaraj Ingin and secretary of the All-India Kisan Sabha Moula Mulla, who were part of the delegation, told presspersons here on Tuesday that a strong case was also made for the withdrawal of the 15 per cent incentive being given for importing pulses.

Mr. Manpade said the delegation members told the Prime Minister that since there was no import duty, the prices of pulses in Indian market had crashed, affecting the farmers. The delegation also met Finance Minister P. Chidambaram outside the Prime Minister's Office the same day.

Mr. Chidambaram told the delegation that there was no proposal before the Union government for imposing import duty on pulses or increasing the duty on sugar imports. The Finance Minister reportedly told the delegation that the 15 per cent incentive was given to only those importers of pulses who suffered losses.

Expressing their displeasure over the response of the Prime Minister and the Finance Minister to the genuine demands of farmers, Mr. Manpade said the farmers' organisations would chalk out the next course of action shortly for getting their demands fulfilled.

Farmers' leaders were also critical of both Railway Minister M. Mallikarjun Kharge and Bidar MP N. Dharam Singh for not accompanying the delegation which met the Prime Minister to raise the issues concerning the farmers.

President of the Krishik Samaj Siddaramappa Patil Dangapur was present.

🔒 ***There is no proposal to impose duty on import of red gram, pulses, farmers told***

🔒 ***Fresh action plan to be drawn up for getting their demands fulfilled***

Farmers oppose Kasturirangan panel report

Deputy Commissioner tries to convince them, but in vain

HEBRI (UDUPI DISTRICT), February 12, 2014 - Farmers opposed the recommendations of K. Kasturirangan Committee Report on Western Ghats at a meeting organised by Udupi Zilla Raitha Sangha and Huyyar Patel Charitable Trust here recently.

A group of farmers walked out of the meeting in protest against the Kasturirangan Report. Presiding over the meeting, Vinaykumar Sorake, Urban Development Minister, said the Cabinet Sub-Committee was studying the recommendations of the report. He had urged the State government to take the views of all affected Gram Panchayats before deciding on the panel's report.

M.T. Reju, Deputy Commissioner, tried to convince farmers that the Kasturirangan panel report had nothing against farmers and protected agricultural activities. It did not oppose land conversion and suggested subsidies.

Denotify land from sanctuary: farmers

MACHILIPATNAM, February 12, 2014 - Farmers belonging to Edurumondi and Nachugunta islands in Krishna district staged a dharna in front of the Collectorate in Machilipatnam, demanding denotification of the 2,100 acre area from the Krishna Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS). Edurumondi-Nachugunta Islands Rythu Coolie Bhu Porata Samiti (ENIRCBPS) members and farmers met Krishna district Collector M. Raghunandan Rao and sought his help in the issue.

Norwegian experts interact with farmers



Stock-taking: Experts from Norway taking feedback from farmers on the alternative wetting and drying (AWD) method of irrigation at Ralla Wagu Tanda of Nalgonda district on Tuesday.- Photo: Singam Venkataramana

NALGONDA, February 12, 2014 - An expert team of the Norwegian Institute for Agriculture and Environmental Research visited the villages in Damarcherla mandal on Tuesday to elicit the response on the alternate wetting and drying (AWD) method of irrigation, which is being implemented under the Nagarjunasagar left bank canal.

They inspected the paddy fields and interacted with the farmers to assess the implementation of the scheme at the grassroots level.

The Norwegian Institute for Agriculture and Environmental Research, called as Bioforsk, in association with the government's Water and Land Management Training and Research Institute (WALMTARI), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) and Royal Norwegian Embassy, have introduced the AWD irrigation practice in about 145 acres in 10 villages under the Nagarjunasagar left bank canal in Damarcherla mandal.

Going by the traditional practices, the farmers maintain water in paddy fields at the height of two-inch level. Under the new system, the ryots irrigate the fields for 10 days and keep them dry for five to seven days to save water.

The project was initiated in a few acres last year and now, it has been extended to 145 acres this rabi season. To know the response at the grassroots level, a Norwegian team led by Bioforsk Director (International Projects) for South Asia, South East Asia and Africa, Nagothu Udaya Bhaskar and organisation senior researcher (Agrohydrology) Johannes Deelstra inspected the paddy fields. Mr. Nagothu told *The Hindu* that the buzz word was climate-smart agriculture which would be possible with the AWD.

However, the response to the new practice was quite affirmative.

"We have been saving one third of water with the alternate wetting and drying method introduced under the Climaadapt project," Miryalaguda irrigation Superintendent Engineer Sudhakar Reddy told the visiting team.

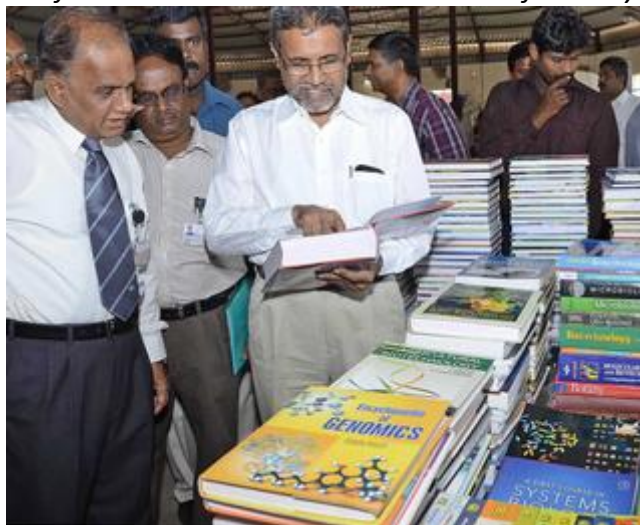
Water-use efficiency

Director, WALMTARI, K.Yella Reddy said AWD was among the methods to save water in paddy cultivation, while maintaining the yields. "Moreover, the practice increases the water-use efficiency by reducing seepage and percolation losses. It ensures root growth, facilitates higher nutrient uptake," he said. A farmer from Rallawagu Tanda, Kodali Prabhakar, who has taken up cultivation in 14 acres under the AWD method, said they were ready to practice it if the government supported them.

☞ The AWD irrigation practice has been introduced in 10 villages under the Nagarjunasagar left bank canal ☞ Under the new system, the ryots irrigate fields for 10 days and keep them dry for seven days to save water

Three-day book fair begins at TNAU

The fair is held under the theme 'a book for every reader'



Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University K. Ramasamy (second left) taking a look at an array of books after inaugurating a three-day book fair at the university in Coimbatore on Tuesday. - PHOTO: S.SIVA SARAVANAN

It was an impressive array of books at the Book Fair of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University here on Tuesday. The three-day fair took off with publishing houses from Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai and Mumbai taking up stall

space to display their books.

Vice-Chancellor of the university K. Ramasamy inaugurated the fair that was organised by the Directorate of Publications and Public Relations of the university, which will be held till February 13. It carried the theme 'a book for every reader'.

There are 26 stalls displaying a wide range of books in agriculture and allied sectors, which is expected to benefit students, research scholars, scientists and the public.

R. Vijayaragavan, Special Officer, Publications and Public Relations, said the publishers were told of the requirement of the students on choice of books. The books were mostly based on the curriculum of the students, the study material of faculty, and reference material for the library.

"This is the first time that we are organising such a fair on this scale. The response from publishers was very good, but we restricted it to a limited number. There are not only the scientific and technical books, but also simple books on gardening that will interest the urban public. The books are sold at a special discount," he said.

As part of the fair, the university has taken an institutional membership with British Council Library, Chennai. According to Chenju Lakshmi, Manager of Library and Cultural Centres (South India), this would entail the university to use 10 cards on which books could be borrowed for three weeks by students and faculty. They would also get access to many activities organised by the British Council at concessional rates.

There are over 400 institutional members in Tamil Nadu and TNAU is the latest addition, which would give it access to 85,000 e-books and 14,000 e-journals. It was also looking for individual online memberships. The university honoured three former librarians of the university, and unveiled the portrait of S.R. Ranganathan, father of Indian Library Science. An 'author-publisher' interactive session has been planned for Wednesday where prospective authors from among the TNAU faculty would interact with publishers to learn about the terms and conditions of publishing their work.

During the valediction on February 13, TNAU scientists who have published maximum number of quality books in various disciplines will be honoured with merit certificates. The fair is being held at Techno Park II of the university and entry is free.

Bank strike hits paddy procurement

THANJAVUR, February 12, 2014 - The bank employees' strike had its impact on paddy procurement at the Direct Purchase Centres of the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) in some parts of Thanjavur district on Tuesday.

With TNCSC releasing only limited amount to the DPCs for paddy procurement because of the strike, farmers have to wait with their paddy bags at the DPCs to get money.

According to TNCSC officials, Rs. 3 to Rs. 4 lakh was given to each DPC per day for procuring paddy.

Due to the strike, whatever the amount withdrawn before the strike was being disbursed.

So the DPCs got only Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 60,000 per day on Tuesday.

Due to this all the paddy brought by farmers could not be procured at one go.

Horticulture show

A record number of 1,233 entries were seen in the 48th annual horticulture show organised by Rourkela Steel Plant in Rourkela on Sunday.

Now, gas from vegetable waste!

Plant running successfully at Macha Bolarum in Alwal circle



Eco-friendly power: The 'biomethation' plant at Alwal. — Photo: G. Ramakrishna

HYDERABAD, February 12, 2014 - Everyday the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) does the gargantuan task of mopping up around 4,000 metric tonnes of municipal solid waste generated by the city and

transport it to the gigantic municipal dump yard at Jawaharnagar.

Even though segregation of waste has been a non-starter, a few municipal officials have been taking the initiative to 'manage' the biodegradable waste. For instance, in Macha Bolarum area under Alwal circle, a unique 'biomethation' plant of converting vegetable waste into gas has been running successfully.

Six months ago, North Zone Commissioner S. Harikrishna and his team noticed lot of waste generated by the vegetable market in the area and any slight delay in moving it to the dump yard was leading to much stink. Having seen vegetable waste to gas plant run by the Vijayawada Municipal Corporation for a few months some years ago, the North Zone Commissioner decided to set one such unit here. The Khadi & Village Industries Commission was given the task of constructing a gas plant involving an expenditure of Rs.4.3 lakh with vegetable waste as the primary source. A crushing plant fabricated from Coimbatore was brought here and it has been up and functioning well.

The gas thus generated is currently being given free to an orphanage right opposite the plant where about 70 children are staying with the maintenance cost coming to about Rs. 3,000 a month including electricity and labour charges for working about two hours a day.

Huge savings

The gas generated is equal to 10 cylinders a month, which means the orphanage, is spending that much less on LPG cylinders. And this was also leading to 500 kg less of garbage being transported which means savings for the GHMC to the tune of Rs. 3.5 lakh a year, points out Mr. Harikrishna

“Even the vegetable residue coming out after the gas is generated can be a good source of manure although we are releasing it into an existing drain,” he explains.

Absence of official becomes a hurdle for importing fruits



Traders say they have permission to import fruits from Colombo

Clearing trouble: Customs officials said that without the certification from authorised officers under the Food Safety and Standards Act they cannot allow imports as per rules. — File PHOTO: R.M. RAJARATHINAM.

TIRUCHI, February 12, 2014 - Importers have urged the government to take steps

to nominate a designated officer at the Tiruchi Airport to issue no-objection certificates for consignments of food products and fruits imported from abroad.

In the absence of a designated authority, food products and fruits could not be imported from abroad through the airport now, importers said.

According to sources in the industry, although traders were willing to import exotic fruits such as rambutan and strawberry, they are not able to produce certificates from designated authorities under the Food Safety and Standards Act saying that they were fit for human consumption to obtain Customs clearance. Plant Quarantine and Port Health Office authorities at the airport say they are not authorised to issue the certificates, said an importer, who did not want to be identified. “We have got permits to import about 2,000 tonnes of the fruits from Colombo, but we are unable to bring in the consignments due to the problem,” he says.

When contacted, Customs officials said that without the certification from authorised officers under the Food Safety and Standards Act, they cannot allow imports as per rules. However, they will clear such consignments if the samples are certified from designated port health officers in other places such as Chennai or Tuticorin.

But importers said that it would be impossible to send samples from Tiruchi to get the certificates as the fruits were highly perishable and even a delay of a day or two could result in the fruits turning rotten, they said. Industry sources said if a designated officer was appointed at the airport here, there was good scope for importing food products and fruits from abroad. Although nearly 400 tonnes of cargo was exported through the airport every month on an average, imports remain minimal.

Imports had just started picking up slightly and currently about three or four tonnes of household and electronic consignments were coming in, sources at the airport said.

“Imports are gradually picking up and there is good scope for importing fruits from Kuala Lumpur and other destinations,” said K. Hari Moorthy, Sales and Operations Executive, Air Asia, Tiruchi. The airline, he added, was exploring opportunities for transshipment of import consignments to Chennai and other centres through the Tiruchi airport.

Water level

Mettur dam - The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 51.19 feet on Tuesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 139 cusecs and the discharge, 600 cusecs.

Water level in the **Papanasam dam** on Tuesday stood at 66.60 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 189.47 cusecs and 1,154.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

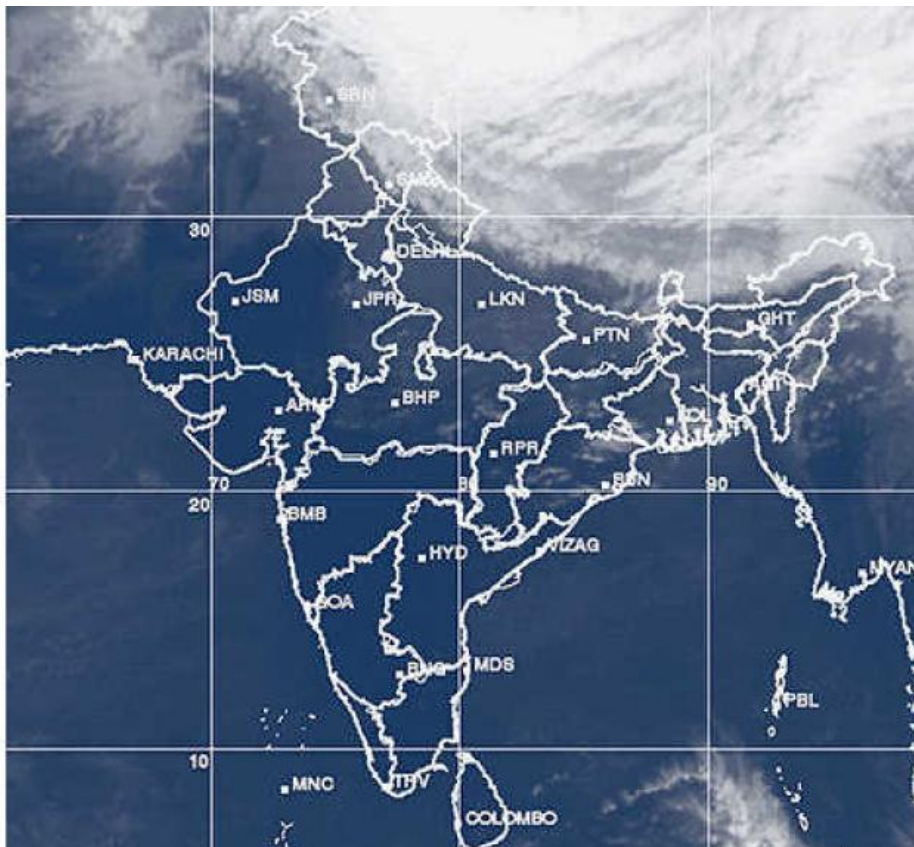
The level of **Manimuthar dam** stood at 81.27 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 19 cusecs and 90 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari - The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 15.90 feet, 46.30 feet in Perunchani, 6.66 feet in Chittar I, 6.75 feet in Chittar II, 3.80 feet in Poigai and 54.12 feet in Mamabazhathuraiaru.

The water level in **Periyar dam** stood at 110.90 feet (permissible level is 136 feet) with an inflow of 105 cusecs and a discharge of 105 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 34.58 feet (total level is 71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 936 mcft.

There was no rainfall recorded during the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday, PWD officials here said.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on February 11.

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Feb 12

Max Min

30° | 22°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 78

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:32

Sunset: 06:13

Barometer: 1010

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Thursday, Feb 13

Max Min

31° | 21°

Extended Forecast for a week

Friday

Feb 14



31° | 20°

Partly Cloudy

Saturday

Feb 15



25° | 23°

Overcast

Sunday

Feb 16



26° | 24°

Overcast

Monday

Feb 17



28° | 24°

Cloudy

Tuesday

Feb 18



27° | 24°

Cloudy

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bank strike hits payout to farmers

TRICHY: [Bank strike](#) which has caused enormous trouble to public as well as traders also posed its share of problems to farmers. Several [farmers](#) who reached the direct [procurement centres](#) with loads of crops had to wait in long queues in the last two days. More importantly, officials stopped to take the produce citing that there was no cash available to pay the farmers due to bank strike.

Farmers from Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts have been offloading their harvest at the direct procurement centres which the state government has set up in major locations in the districts. The civil supplies and the consumer protection department of the state government have been assigned the duty for procurement. However, lack of timely alert about bank strike and its effect on operations at the direct procurement centres have put farmers in distress.

The centres receive at least Rs 4 to Rs 5 lakh daily from banks for handing over to farmers against the crops they sell. The crops are procured in 40 kg gunny bags. The collection centres have suspended their operations in the last two days after the bank strike, which commenced on Monday, hit transactions.

Farmers spent the night in front of the centres with their produce. Swaminathan S, a farmer

from Thanjavur Nanjankottai village, has been waiting in front of the centre in Trichy for the last two days. The civil supplies and the consumer protection department should have planned ahead by arranging additional money from banks, Swaminathan said.

The farmers find it prudent to stay put before the procurement centres as they don't want to spend money to travel back to their villages without selling the crops. Farmers are taking care to protect their produce with plastic covers.

The officials at the procurement centres said they could arrange only Rs 50,000. It was not sufficient for paying to all the farmers who have arrived here. The centres will function normally from Wednesday afternoon, they said.

London banker to fish farmers' help

PATNA: A 28-year-old Bihari, who is a former student of Oxford and Columbia University, has facilitated loan of more than Rs 2.5 crore within a year to over 885 fish farmers in 11 blocks of Muzaffarpur district.

A native of Darbhanga district, [Akshay Verma](#), vice-president of UBS Investment Bank, London, has also ensured life insurance coverage for more than 2,000 fishermen and fisherwomen in Muzaffarpur district. Verma, who had his early education at Muzaffarpur's [Prabhat Tara School](#), has taken a year off from UBS Investment Bank to work in four districts, including Vaishali, Darbhanga and Sitamarhi.

"I have always been active in social projects and community work with several NGOs/foundations/UN agencies and led a team to Latehar (now in Jharkhand) in 2006 to conduct the first social audit for MNRGA," Verma told TOI over phone from Muzaffarpur.

"I have always wanted to give back to society and it was that reason I chose to pursue Master's in public administration from Columbia University where I interacted with leaders, diplomats and bureaucrats from various countries," Verma, a graduate in mathematics (Hons) in 2007 from St Stephen's College, Delhi, said. He has facilitated training in modern techniques of fish farming. Hundreds of applications are being prepared for loan disbursements, life insurance and fish crop insurance. He is working in Gaighat, Aurai, Katra, Sakra, Bandra, Muraul, Mushahari, Bochaha, Kudhani, Paroo and Saraiya blocks of Muzaffarpur district, Singwara block in Darbhanga district, Runisaidpur in Sitamarhi district and Khanpur block in Samastipur.

Verma has already created over 100 women self-help groups in five blocks of Muzaffarpur and three blocks of Darbhanga - Singwara, Jalwar and Bahadurpur.

An alumnus of DPS Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, Verma said, "I have taken a year off from UBS to stabilize, upscale and expand my activities to work with women SHGs, fishermen and fisherwomen." He is also associated with over a dozen sports and academic institutions across the world.

A wider insurance cover, with options to choose from

From the next kharif season, crop insurance is set to spread wider with two schemes taking the place of the current one.

The National Agriculture Insurance Scheme is being upgraded to the Modified NAIS; it will compensate for damage on the basis of crop yield. The Weather-based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS) will provide for compensation on the basis of variations (deficit, excess, unseasonal) in rains, frost, heat, and humidity, even if these variations don't actually cause damage on the ground.

The modified scheme brings the farmer two major advantages. The unit area for determining damage is smaller. This will bring the claims down from the level of a revenue circle (about 25 villages) to that of a panchayat, which may consist of one or two villages. Earlier, an insured farmer would get relief only if his entire revenue circle suffered crop damage to a specified extent.

The second key advantage is a revision in this specification. The indemnity level has been raised from 60 per cent to 80 or 90 per cent, depending to the vulnerability of the area. It means farmers will get insurance even if the yield is down to 90 per cent of threshold levels. States such as Maharashtra have already been following 80 per cent under NAIS for the last two years for some crops in the rabi season.

Other vital advantages with MNAIS are that it covers prevented sowing/planting risk (inability to sow due to prevailing adverse weather conditions) and offers post-harvest losses in coastal areas. Moreover, ahead of making a likely claim, an insured farmer will get on-account payment up to 25 per cent of the sum insured.

Farmers who have taken a loan will have to take either of the schemes compulsorily. Non-loanees, too, can choose either of these voluntarily.

WBCIS, however, may not be immediately available as the second choice uniformly across the country since it depends on the availability of automatic weather stations. Five thousands AWSs are being created in the country with 50 per cent funding from the Centre. Unlike earlier, when it would be paid almost entirely by the farmer but for a nominal subsidy, the half premium in MNAIS will now be subsidised by the central and state governments. It will be graded: the higher the risk, the higher the premium. The farmers' part will be added directly into his loan amount.

For the first time, even farmers' groups and societies serviced by fertiliser companies and pesticide firms, crop growers' associations, self-help groups and agriculture NGOs have been covered under the modified scheme.

Satellite imagery will be used to check the ground reality of damage and hence the claims as also to decide the sample size of the crop-cutting experiments done to assess the actual yield of a particular area. It is subtracted from the threshold yield of the area to arrive at the shortfall in yield..

Threshold yield, also called guaranteed yield, is the average yield of the area for the past seven years, with that for up to two government-declared calamity years to be excluded. The major challenge, however, is the massive crop-cutting exercise that will have to be undertaken since MNAIS has upped the number of CCEs from 12 per revenue circle to 12 per panchayat level, which is 10-fold increase. State governments currently lack the machinery to carry this out. "It's a huge ask. We need to graduate to higher technical modes such as remote sensing to be able to manage it," said Maharashtra's additional chief secretary (agriculture) Sudhir Kumar Goel.

In case of the weather-based scheme, “adverse weather incidence” will be the basis for arriving at payouts. It is a measure of the deviation of “actual weather” from “trigger weather” (a predefined weather condition for a given crop in a given area). Payouts will be automatically computed on the basis of this deviation and the money deposited directly in the farmer’s account.

What’s new

Under Modified National Agriculture Insurance Scheme, unit area reduced to the village/village panchayat level for major crops

Threshold yield based on average yield of the preceding seven years excluding up to two calamity years declared by concerned state/UT.

On-account payment up to 25% advance of likely claims as immediate relief.

Minimum indemnity level raised to 80% and 90% based on crop and location.

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On and off goes maize in Punjab



In spring, maize will consume a lot of water, and conservation of water is the reason for diversifying from paddy in the first place.

SUMMARY

Paddy’s largest shift is to a crop that government encourages one season and discourages the next.

The most preferred crop one season and out of favour the next, maize will alternate between extremes in Punjab’s selective policymaking. The diversifying state gives maize the largest area shifting away from paddy, around 35 per cent of 12 lakh hectares, which would take the total area under the crop from 1.29 lakh hectares until 2012 to 5.5 lakh hectares once the diversification is complete.

All the maize cultivation, however, is to be done in one season every year. For January-February to May, the state is discouraging maize although yields are known to be high in spring. This is because of the very reason the state is shifting away from paddy; spring maize too consumes a lot of water.

“After March the temperature starts rising and reaches 35 to 45°C by May-June, and the average sunshine duration is nine to nine-and-a-half hours. The water evaporates fast and maize needs frequent watering, which affects the water table,” says Dr Swatantra Kumar Aery, chief agriculture officer, Jalandhar.

For paddy, the Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act, 2009, bans sowing before June 15, keeping it close to the rainy season. For maize, the government wants cultivation restricted to the kharif season from June to September.

Because of its high yield (around 36 quintals per acre), spring maize does thrive on 24,000 to 25,000 hectares in around half a dozen districts including Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur

and parts of Malwa. Harvested in May-June, it can earn a farmer Rs 35,000 to 40,000 per acre.

As an alternative this season, the agriculture department is encouraging spring/summer moong and mah, vegetables, spring sugarcane, sunflower and green fodder. "All these crops are capable of giving nearly the same returns as spring maize. Pulses are two-month crops and need just two or three waterings," says Aery.

The department is targeting one lakh hectares under moong and mah. These can be grown at the end of February, or in March and April, a trend introduced by the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) a couple of years ago, says Dr M S Sandhu, the state agriculture director. "Earlier farmers used to sow pulses only during May to July," said Sandhu.

ATMA's deputy project director, Dr Naresh Gulati, says four to five quintals pulses can be grown on one acre with a spending of Rs 6,000 to 7,000. Some progressive farmers in Muktsar district have got even six quintals per acre, he says, adding even an average farmer can earn Rs 40,000 to 50,000 from every acre in two months.

"Pulses help improve soil fertility. The need for fertilisers decreases 25 per cent in the next crop cycle," says Dr Gulati. After harvesting, nodules of pulses are left in the fields to improve soil fertility.

The government provides free moong seeds if a cluster of farmers increases the area under the crop, says agriculture director Sandhu.

Sunflower is grown in February. A farmer can harvest around 7-8 quintals per acre and earn around Rs 25,000 from the crop, whose duration is less than four months, says joint director, Food Security Mission, Dr Gurdial Singh. "There is a huge demand for sunflower oil, which has a huge potential in the state," says Dr Aery.

Agriculture department records show that sunflower was initiated in the state in the early 1990s and went on to cover an area of 1.03 lakh hectares by 1995-96. Even until 1999, the crop was cultivated on around 70,000 hectares. The decline has been due to a poor marketing policy and not bringing hybrid seeds. By 2012, it went down to 14,000 hectares. The government has fixed a target of around 20,000 hectares by the end of this season; last year it was 16,000 to 17,000 hectares, Dr Sandhu says.

Mentha too holds out a spring promise to farmers, who can earn around Rs 30,000 to 50,000 per acre depending on the variety they sow, says Bhavjit Sarabha, who cultivates it over 100 acres and has also established a processing unit to extract mentha oil.



Flowers to Cost a Bomb This Valentine's Day

Planning to wow your love on Valentine's day with a dozen red roses and a host of other goodies? Be prepared, because florists across the city say that roses, and most other flowers, are likely to cost a bomb. And then some.

High prices at major sources of supply, compounded by the string of auspicious days this Valentine's week, have played havoc with the city's flower prices. Roses in particular were already selling at Rs 25 or Rs 30 per rose (retail) and costing about `200 and more for a 20-rose bundle wholesale, on Tuesday morning. Prices are expected to rise further come the eve of February 14 and Valentine's day.



A flower vendor at Koyambedu sits dismally among more crates of flowers than he can handle | A Raja Chidambaram

The rise in prices comes as more of a surprise because most florists also said that they expected a lower demand for roses on Valentine's Day this year. Shouldn't lower demand mean lower prices? No, said John Peter, a flower wholesaler at the Koyambedu Flower market. "Flowers have been steadily increasing in cost for the past few months. The expected reduction in demand is primarily because of the high prices," he pointed out. Florists across Chennai agreed. Laxmi, manager of Fern 'n' Petals, a popular florist in the city, told City Express that while 'roses for your valentine' remain the traditional offering one would offer their partner on February 14, more and more couples were choosing to buck the trend. "More people are choosing to go for something other than flowers this year. Mainly because some of the other options actually tend to cost less than roses," she said. "We have received only three to four orders till now this year. Last year it was substantially higher."

And the rose has seemed to have lost its allure, not just with couples, but with hotels as well. The Park hotel's floral theme for Valentine's day will have red flowers by the hundreds, but not the rose. "We are planning to use red flowers in our decorations and themes for Valentine's day. But they will not be roses," said a hotel official. He added, "Roses will figure in our restaurants but they won't be part of the main decorations."

With Valentine's day only two days away, sudden reversals in expectations are unlikely, but definitely not out of the question. According to wholesalers and florists both, demand for flowers is a very fickle thing. "It is possible that there will be a sudden spurt in demand on February 13, whatever the prices. But that can only be seen when it happens," said flower wholesaler Mohan. And will supply be strained if that happens? "No," he said, "we can order and receive sufficient supply from Bengaluru. Should the demand increase suddenly, supply will not be an issue."

But flower sellers, from wholesalers to retailers, were all united in opinion on one front. However supply and demand equations should turn out this Thursday, roses will still cost a bomb.

Spot rubber strengthens

Kottayam, February 11: Spot rubber strengthened further on Tuesday. The market seemed to be moving under the expectations of a firm trend ahead as the Kerala Government has decided to procure rubber up to Rs. 171 a kg for RSS 4 to support growers. There were no quantity sellers even at higher levels, but the gains were limited in the absence of fresh enquiries from the industrial sector. Overall volumes were also low.

Sheet rubber was quoted firm at Rs. 146.50 (Rs. 146) by traders. The grade increased to Rs. 146 (Rs. 145.50) and Rs. 143 (Rs. 142.50) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

February futures improved to Rs. 147.80 (Rs. 147.24), March to Rs. 150.90 (Rs. 149.98), April to Rs. 155.19 (Rs.153.97), May to Rs. 157.60 (Rs. 156.01) and June to Rs. 158.50 (Rs. 156.49) for RSS 4 on National Multi Commodity Exchange. RSS 3 (spot) closed marginally higher at Rs. 131.91 (Rs. 131.11) at Bangkok.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 146.50 (146); RSS-5: 144.50 (144); Ungraded: 142 (141); ISNR 20: 143 (142) and Latex 60%: 118.50 (117.50).

India begins importing Lanka nutmeg



Poor crop last year leads to shortage; traders strike deals to buy at Rs. 675/kg

Growing consumption Nutmeg is in demand given its use in medicines, cosmetics and in various food products

Kochi, February 11: India has begun to import nutmeg from Sri Lanka following production shortfall.

Poor crop last season led to a shortage and consequent rise in prices, according to market sources. As a result, dealers are importing from Sri Lanka, said an importer who struck some deals with traders in Colombo last week. He

told *Business Line* that against the domestic price of Rs.725 a kg, nutmeg rate in Sri Lanka was Rs. 675 .

He said that mace production in India is also short of the demand. Against demand of 1,500 tonnes, mace production is only 800 tonnes, the trader said.

According to market sources, total indigenous production of nutmeg was 11,000 tonnes. From this nearly 8,000 tonnes of nutmeg with shell could be recovered. The mace recovered will come to only 10 per cent i.e., 800 tonnes. The next crop is due in June-July. Some growers in growing areas of Kottayam and Pathanamthitta districts in Kerala said the crop was poor last year due to unfavourable weather conditions.

India and Indonesia are the two main producers of the spice. Others are Sri Lanka and Grenada, which produce a small quantity. Principal importers are the European Union, the

US, Japan and India. Singapore and the Netherlands are major re-exporters. Also, the Gulf is a major market.

During April-September 2013, India exported 2,700 tonnes of nutmeg and mace worth Rs. 155.85 crore at an unit value of Rs. 577.21 a kg. Against this, exports during the same period the previous year were 1,225 tonnes valued at Rs. 90.86 crore at the unit value of Rs. 741.73 a kg. Indian output of nutmeg with shell is estimated at around 11,000 tonnes and when the outer meat is removed it would come to about 8,000 tonnes.

Domestic demand for mace is estimated at around 1,500 tonnes a year and the production this year estimated at little over 50 per cent of the requirement, traders said. Meanwhile, one section of the trade said the requirement of nutmeg has ranged between 13,000 tonnes (without shell) and 15,000 tonnes, of late, given its growing use in indigenous medicines/drugs, cosmetics and in various food products. The demand includes exports which range between 1,500 and 3,000 tonnes depending upon availability.

Groundnut oil prices set to rise further

Rajkot, February 11: GROUNDNUT OIL PRICES MAY IMPROVE

Groundnut and washed cottonseed oil prices increased on fresh stockists demand and branded product manufacturers. Traders said that prices may improve over next few days. Groundnut oil loose increased to Rs. 725-730 for 10 kg, while *teliya* tin gained Rs. 15 at Rs. 1,135-1,136 for 15 kg. Groundnut oil new tin traded up by Rs. 10 to Rs. 1,315-1,320.OUR CORRESPONDENT

NSEL crisis pulls down turnover in pepper futures

Kochi, February 11: POOR DEMAND COOLS PEPPER

Pepper prices declined on the spot and futures markets on Wednesday on the back of poor demand. On the NMCE, February and March contracts lost Rs. 200 and Rs. 551 respectively to Rs. 53,100 and Rs. 53,300 quintal. Turnover increased to five tonnes. Total net open position moved up at 29 tonnes. Spot prices fell by Rs. 200 to Rs. 51,000 (ungarbled) and Rs. 53,000 (garbled) a quintal on weak demand. Export prices were at \$8,650 (c&f) for the Europe and \$8,900 a tonne (c&f) for the US and has become irrelevant,.GK NAIR

Decision on sugar subsidy deferred

New Delhi, February 11: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Tuesday evening defers its decision on fixing export subsidy on raw sugar.

The sugar industry has been waiting for the Cabinet panel's decision on incentive for export of raw sugar for almost a fortnight now. The issue was discussed, but no call was taken due to difference of opinions between Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and Food Minister KV Thomas over the quantum of subsidy.

Stockists keep off edible oils market

Mumbai, February 11: EDIBLE OILS RULE STEADY

Edible oils prices ruled steady on need-based demand and tracking bearish futures market. Soya oil inched up by Rs. 5 for 10 kg, while rapeseed oil declined by Rs. 1. The volume was thin. Sources said as stockists have covered more than 2,000 tonnes of palmolein the previous day they stayed away from the market. In Mumbai, a refinery sold 250-300 tonnes of palmolein at Rs. 590 for delivery up to March 15. Resellers offered palmolein at Rs. 583 for but there were no takers. Indigenous edible oils were under pressure of new arrivals.OUR CORRESPONDENT

Slack N. India demand takes sheen off turmeric

Erode, February 11: TURMERIC LOSES SHEEN

Spot turmeric prices decreased on Tuesday on lack of upcountry orders coupled with a decline in the futures market. . Traders quoted a higher price and procured 1,540 bags of the 3,200 that arrived. For want of quality, only 12 bags of quality turmeric were sold against arrival of 160 bags in the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing society. Similarly, in the Regulated Market Committee also, the sale was very low – 111 bags against the arrival of 227.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety (new crop) was sold at Rs.5,617-6,489; the root variety (old crop) Rs. 5,099-6,319.OUR CORRESPONDENT

Outlook turns bearish for chana on new crop arrivals

Indore, February 11: OUTLOOK TURNS BEARISH FOR CHANA

Subdued demand and steady rise in arrival of new crop kept chana and dal prices stable in Indore mandis with chana (kanta) at Rs. 2,775-2,800 a quintal, while chana (desi) ruled at Rs. 2,500-2,600, chana (mausmi) at Rs. 3,500-4,500, chana (vishal) at Rs. 2,500-3,250, while chana (kaktu) ruled at Rs. 3,100. New chana is ruling at Rs. 2,600-50 amid arrival of 500-600 bags. Given the fact that there is a huge inventory of imported chana and arrivals of the new crop are set to rise, prospect for chana appears bearish, said Rahul Vora, a local chana trader .OUR CORRESPONDENT

Hopes of financial support to industry sweetens sugar

Mumbai, February 11: HOPES OF GOVT SOPS LIFT SUGAR

Sugar prices in the physical market rose Rs. 20-30 a quintal, while on the futures market declined by Rs.15-20. Spot market turned bullish on hopes that the Government will provide enough financial support to the sugar industry, which led producers to hold back their produce, supported by renewed demand from local stockists. Maharashtra's sugar mills sold

over 75,000 bags on second consecutive day. Arrivals at the Vashi market were around 60-62 truckloads (of 100 bags each) while local dispatches were 58-60 truck loads. On Monday, 19-20 mills offered tenders and sold 75,000-80,000 bags at Rs.2,500-2,620 (Rs. 2,480-2,600) for S-grade and Rs. 2,650-2,820 (Rs. 2,650-2,800) for M-grade. They offloaded old stocks at Rs. 10 lower also. Our Correspondent

Prices mixed at N. India tea sale

Kolkata, February 11: The North India tea market was mixed at last week's sale (number 6). While the average price of orthodox tea at the Kolkata centre was up by over 14 per cent due to lower offerings, that of CTC ruled flat.

Meanwhile, at the Guwahati centre, the average price for CTC leaf ruled flat and the average price for dust dropped eight per cent. According to an industry expert, last week's sale saw usual trend in prices and offerings.

"We expect the selling of end-season crop to be completed over the next three weeks. Prices should firm up, after the arrival of first flush crop by second week of March," the expert said. While more than 22 per cent of the offerings remained unsold at both Kolkata and Guwahati centres, some 24 per cent of the offerings was unsold at Siliguri.

The average price of CTC leaf at the Kolkata centre was Rs. 120.17 a kg (Rs. 122.72) and average price for orthodox was Rs. 133.87 a kg (Rs. 116.93). The average price for Darjeeling tea declined more than 8 per cent to Rs. 135.34 a kg (Rs. 147.46).

At the Guwahati centre, the average price of CTC leaf and dust ruled at Rs. 107.8 a kg (Rs. 106.99) and Rs.99.82 a kg (Rs. 108.42), respectively. Siliguri saw prices ruling at Rs. 104.84 a kg for CTC leaf (Rs. 105.96) and Rs. 108.57 a kg for dust (Rs. 111.19).

Meet on fair trade practices in spices



Kochi, February 11: The first session of the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) organised by Spices Board commenced in Kochi on Tuesday.

According to A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board, the committee will provide an ideal platform for the developing countries to enhance their capabilities towards capacity building, sustainability and promoting fair practices in global spice trade.

This, in turn, would facilitate international spice trade, through better transparency.

CCSCH, set up by the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC) to aid in consumer

safety and ensure fair practices in trade of spices and herbs, will encourage deliberations towards harmonisation of global quality standards for spices and culinary herbs, he said.

Earlier inaugurating the function, Kerala Governor Nikhil Kumar said that India's heightened profile at the Codex through CCSCH provides a golden opportunity for the country to play a competent leadership role for the developing world.

The resultant discussions will lead to laying the foundation stone to evolving solutions to the prevailing problems in the trade, he said.

Business Standard

Palm oil down 0.3% on profit-booking

[Crude palm oil](#) prices fell 0.33% to Rs 548.50 per 10 kg in futures trading today as speculators booking profits at prevailing higher levels, driven by sluggish demand in the spot market.

Besides, availability of adequate stocks in the physical market also put pressure on crude palm oil prices.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), crude palm oil for delivery in February declined Rs 1.80, or 0.33%, to Rs 548.50 per 10 kg in business turnover of 16 lots.

Likewise, the oil for delivery in March shed Rs 1.70, or 0.31%, to Rs 551 per 10 kg in 63 lots.

Market analysts said profit-booking by speculators at prevailing higher levels amid sluggish demand in the spot market mainly led to decline in crude palm oil prices at futures trade.

Sugar up 0.5% on expectations of government sops

[Sugar](#) prices remained higher for the second straight day and prices rose further by 0.54% to Rs 2,780 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators engaged positions on hopes that the government may announce some incentives.

Besides, rising demand in the spot markets due to ongoing wedding season also supported the upside.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), sugar for delivery in March gained Rs 15, or 0.54%, to Rs 2,780 per quintal with an open interest of 19,460 lots.

Likewise, the sweetener for delivery in February moved up by Rs 9, or 0.33%, to Rs 2,730 per quintal in 11,190 lots.

Analysts said apart from pick-up in demand in the spot markets for the ongoing wedding season, expectations that the government may announce a subsidy of Rs 3,500 per tonne on export of four million tonnes of raw sugar, influenced sugar futures here.

Cardamom down 0.8% on sluggish demand

[Cardamom](#) prices moved down by 0.86% to Rs 822.50 per kg in futures market today as speculators reduced their holdings due to sluggish demand in the spot market at higher levels.

Besides, adequate stocks in the physical market on fresh arrivals from producing regions also put pressure on cardamom prices.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), cardamom for delivery in March declined by Rs 7.10, or 0.86%, to Rs 822.50 per kg in a business turnover of 639 lots.

In a similar fashion, the spice for delivery in February traded lower by Rs 2.30, or 0.33%, to Rs 697.20 per kg in 17 lots.

Analysts attributed the fall in cardamom prices at futures trade to offloading of positions by speculators due to sluggish demand in the spot market at prevailing higher levels.

Chana down 0.2% on subdued demand

[Chana](#) prices fell 0.27% to Rs 2,995 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators offloaded their positions, tracking a weak trend in spot market on low demand against adequate supplies.

At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for delivery in April declined by Rs 8, or 0.27%, to Rs 2,995 per quintal with an open interest of 83,970 lots.

Similarly, the commodity for delivery in February shed Rs 5, or 0.17%, to Rs 2,860 per quintal in 34,550 lots.

Analysts said speculators offloaded positions on subdued demand in the spot market against adequate supplies from producing regions which kept pressure on chana prices at futures trade.

Potato up 0.2% on pick-up in demand

[Potato](#) prices gained 0.22% to Rs 1,108.50 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators created positions on pick-up in demand in the spot market amid restricted arrivals.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for delivery in March rose by Rs 2.40, or 0.22%, to Rs 1,108.50 per quintal in business turnover of 109 lots.

Potato for April contract also edged up by Re one, or 0.09%, to Rs 1,152.80 per quintal in 32 lots.

Analysts said besides rising demand in spot markets, restricted arrivals from producing belts also influenced potato prices at futures trade.

Jeera down 1.1% on increased supply, weak demand

[Jeera](#) prices fell 1.13% to Rs 11,855 per quintal in futures trading today as speculators trimmed positions amid weak domestic as well as export demand.

At the [National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange](#), jeera for delivery in March fell by Rs

135, or 1.13%, to Rs 11,855 per quintal with an open interest of 6,894 lots.

Likewise, the spice for delivery in April traded lower by Rs 127.50, or 1.07%, to Rs 11,770 per quintal in 4,503 lots.

Analysts attributed the fall in jeera futures to trimming of positions by speculators due to weak domestic and export demand.

Coriander down 0.7% on low demand, higher supply

[Coriander](#) prices moved down by 0.74% to Rs 9,205 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators reduced their positions.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, coriander for delivery in April fell by Rs 69, or 0.74%, to Rs 9,205 per quintal with an open interest of 42,530 lots.

Similarly, the spice for delivery in February lost Rs 60, or 0.73%, to Rs 8,185 per quintal in 13,760 lots.

Market analysts said speculators reduced their positions on low demand in the spot market against higher supplies from producing regions which led to decline in coriander prices at futures trade.

Potato production in West Bengal is likely to be lower by 10-15%

[Potato production](#) in [West Bengal](#) is likely to be lower by 10-15% on account of [pest infestation](#) in about a quarter of potato-growing districts of the state.

As a result, potato prices, which had come down after an abysmal rise in prices in November-December, have once again started firming up. Prices have gone up by Rs 50-75 per quintal in the last few days over reports of Late Blight disease infesting the crop.

“This year, Late Blight disease has infested about 25% potato-production area, which could bring down the yield by 10-15%,” said Patit Paban De, member, West Bengal Cold Storage Association.

West Bengal produces about 10 million tonnes of potatoes every year. Of this, only 5.5 million tonnes are domestically consumed. The state ranks second in terms of overall potato production, next only to Uttar Pradesh.

Hooghly accounts for the highest production of potato in the state, followed by Paschim Medinipore, Burdwan, Bankura and Jalpaiguri. This year, Late Blight disease has hit the districts of Paschim Medinipore, Bankura and Jalpaiguri, according to De. About 75% of the total potato production in the state is concentrated in these five districts.

Only about two months back, shortage of potatoes had led to rise in its prices like never before. Steps taken by West Bengal to reduce prices included direct procurement and sale of the commodity at Rs 13 a kg, ban on exports and the deadline to vacate cold storages. In

September, farmers in Bengal had sold potato at Rs 4 a kg, a loss of Re 1 a kg. After floods and rain in October, potato prices started moving up. Thus, prices of potatoes had reached to a record Rs 900 per quintal, which had come down to the normal level of Rs 500 per quintal by January with the arrival of new crop in January.

At present potato prices are ruling between Rs 550-625 per quintal, against Rs 500 per quintal last year.

Potato cultivation is a risky bet for farmers. Suicides and distress sale are nothing new in the growing season. The cause of the problem is poor infrastructure and poor marketing. With 10 million tonne of production, the storage capacity in West Bengal is only close to five million tonne.

While a handful of rich farmers in the districts of Paschim Medinipur, Bardhaman and Hooghly can afford to pay for transportation and rent of cold storages, a large number of farmers depend on middlemen to sell their produce.

With the cost of production at Rs 5 a kg, the rent for keeping a kg of potato in cold storage is nearly a third of the total cost at Rs 2 a kg.

Most of the potato crop is harvested between January and March, with a smaller, early crop harvested in November and December. Between April and October potato demand is met mainly through cold storages.

Edible oil prices ease due to higher production expectations

Higher [production](#) of oil seeds has put [prices](#) of edible oils like palm, soya, and groundnut oil under pressure this year. Coupled with weak domestic demand, the prices have come down significantly.

According to [edible oil](#) industry experts, this year price of majority of edible oils have gone down almost 10 to 40% in comparison to last year.

While price of imported edible oil like soya oil and RBD palm oil has decreased about 11% and 7.5% respectively, sunflower oil saw a dip of 5.5% and grape seed oil declined nearly 16% compared to 2012 price level.

Overall edible oil complex has shown downward trend this year. Soya, Sunflower, Groundnut, Palmolein, Palm oil price have come down. However, palmolein and palm oil have not declined as much as other oils because demand for bio diesel was good.

Wholesale prices of edible oils have come down by 10-12%, while retail prices have come down by 6-7%. "The reason being fantastic climatic conditions in South America, Canada, Russia and Ukrain, the main edible oil producing countries. Even in India climatic condition is good. Resulting in higher productivity. Malaysia and Indonesia has also seen favourable weather conditions," top official of an edible oil company said. "The prices will continue to be lower for the next six months," he added.

Govindbhai Patel, managing director of [Deepak Enterprise](#) said, "Domestic oil price may continue to decrease further for some time as crushing is still higher. Crushing activity will

gradually decline in coming days and pressure will reduce on the price. While palm oil price will not decline much as crop size is short.”

In domestic market price of groundnut oil fell about 40% while cotton seed oil decreased nearly 15% by the end of December 2013, compared to price level of 2012.

As per data compiled by The Solvent Extractors' Association of India ([SEA](#)), import of vegetable oils during December 2013 was 1.06 million tonnes compared to 908,587 tonnes in December 2012, up 18%.

The overall import of vegetable oils during November and December 2013 was reported at 2.01 million tonnes compared to 1.60 million tonnes in previous year, rise of 25%.

December, 2013, has shown second highest record import of vegetable oils at 1.06 million tonnes, since 1994. BV Mehta, executive director of SEA, said, “This year all the edible oils prices are reeling under pressure due to expectation of higher production of oil seeds not only in India but across the world.”

Soya oil’s highest ever price quoted was Rs 75,504 per tonne in 2012, which has declined over 11% to Rs 67,200 per tonne in December 2013. Similarly, RBD palm oil price was Rs 65,433 in 2012 but was trading at Rs 60,500 per tonnes in December 2013.

The highest fluctuation was seen in sunflower oil during past one year. In September 2012, sunflower oil price was Rs 71,881 per tonne which increased to Rs 75,000 per tonne in September 2013, but there after it declined to Rs 68,000 per tonne in December last year.

With higher availability of raw material for crushing and weak demand, groundnut oil has been trading at four year low in recent times. Also, poor export demand for groundnut has further resulted in drastic downfall in groundnut oil prices this year.

In January 2013, refined groundnut oil traded at Rs 2,250 for a 15 kg tin, an all time high price, but currently the price of same was ruling around Rs 1,340-1,350, down about 40% from a record high. Current price levels in groundnut oil was last seen in January 2010.

Suresh Kaneria, managing director of Kaneria Oil Industries said, “Main reason for downfall in groundnut oil prices is due to higher availability of groundnut for crushing. Most of the stock in groundnut has been diverted to mills as export of the commodity has been nominal this year.”

Domestic Prices of Edible Oils (Mumbai Market)		
Oil	2012	2013
	(Highest price) in Rs	(December) in Rs
Rape seed Oil	85,996	72,300
Sun-flower Oil	71,881	68,000
Soybean Refined Oil	75,504	67,200
RBD Pamolein	65,433	60,500
Groundnut oil	2,250 (Jan-13)	1,320 (Feb-14)
Source : The Solvent Extractors' Association of India (Edible oil price per tonne, groundnut oil per 15 kg)		

As per the Union ministry of agriculture the estimated acreage under oilseeds as on October 17, 2013, was 19.49 million hectares against 17.76 million hectares in the previous year, up by 1.72 million hectares. Kharif oilseeds crop is estimated at 17 million tonns for the year 2013-14 against last year's 15.18.million tonns. Overall oilseeds yield has increased to 867 kg/ha during current kharif crop from 855 kg/ha last year.
