

Farm credit increased

Interest subvention retained, rice storage exempt from service tax

NEW DELHI, February 18, 2014 - Lauding the “stellar performance” of the agriculture sector, Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram on Monday announced a farm growth of 4.6 per cent in the current year, up from 3.1 per cent achieved during UPA-I.

He said the government set an agriculture credit target of Rs. 8 lakh crore for 2014-15, against Rs.7.35 lakh crore expected this year.

The interest subvention scheme for farm credit, introduced in 2006-07, would continue in the next fiscal. At present, interest rate on farm loan is 7 per cent, while it is 4 per cent for those who repay on time.

“There is a subvention of 2 per cent and an incentive of 3 per cent for prompt payment.”

Thus, the effective rate of interest on farm loans reduced to 4 per cent, “so far Rs. 23,924 crore has been released... I propose to continue the scheme in 2014-15,” he said.

In a bonanza for millers, Mr. Chidambaram exempted the loading, unloading, packing, storage and warehousing of rice from service tax.

Farmers’ grievances day meeting on February 20

PERAMBALUR, February 18, 2014 - The monthly farmers’ grievances day meeting will be held at the collectorate hall here at 10 a.m. on February 20. An official release here on Monday called upon farmers to participate in the meeting and get their grievances solved.

KARUR: The monthly farmers’ grievances day meet will be held at the Collectorate here at 10.30 a.m. on Friday. Petitions pertaining to agricultural issues and those already submitted will be taken up for discussion during the meet, according to a release issued here by District Collector S. Jayandhi.

UAS to set up three research stations on dryland farming

They will come up in Tumkur, Chickballapur and Chamarajanagar

BANGALORE, February 18, 2014 - The University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, will set up three agricultural research stations on dryland agricultural research as Karnataka has the highest extent of drought-prone land in the country, next only to Rajasthan. The good news for the diabetics is that one of them will focus on minor millets, which are not only highly nutritious, but also sought after for their low glycaemic index (an indication of how much and how fast a particular food can increase blood sugar level).

According to UAS Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda, the new research stations would be established in Chickballapur, Chamarajanagar and Tumkur districts.

UAS Research Director M. A. Shankar told *The Hindu* that the proposed centre at Kunigal in Tumkur district would focus on cultivation of minor millets among others as they are suitable for rain-fed farming due to their ability to withstand drought.

There was a dire need to bring minor millets such as ragi, foxtail (*navane*), pearl millet (*sajje*), little millet (*saame*) and sorghum into the mainstream due to their positive impact on the health of consumers as well as usefulness to farmers, he said.

Prof. Shankar expressed concern that though minor millets were being grown in significant manner in areas such as Tumkur and Arsikere, most of them were being exported to Gujarat due to lack of facilities for processing in the State. He indicated that the research station may focus on processing too. This centre would also focus on research related to fodder crops and production of fodder seeds suitable for drylands, he said.

The Chickballapur station would focus on dry land research, seed production and increasing the soil fertility through organic farming, he said. The proposed centre in Chamarajanagar would dedicate itself to research on cultivation of cotton and jowar in rainfed conditions, he added.

☐ ***The station in Tumkur will work on promoting minor millets***

☐ ***The one in Chickballapur will work on increasing soil fertility through organic farming***

Farmers stage demonstration



Farmers staging demonstration at Karumandampalayam near Kodumudi in Erode on Monday. —

PHOTO:M.GOVARTHAN

ERODE, February 18, 2014 - Several hundreds of farmers staged a demonstration at Karumandampalayam near Kodumudi in the district on Monday

demanding immediate release of water to save standing crops.

V.M. Velayutham, president of Kalingarayan Pasana Sabhai, said turmeric crop raised on 7,200 acres, sugarcane on 5,700 acres and banana crop on 750 acres that were in end-stages of cultivation would wither away if water was not released from the Bhavanisagar Dam.

There was sufficient water storage in the dam for saving the crops, Mr. Veleyutham said.

The farmers dispersed after senior PWD officials persuaded them to withdraw their demonstration with an assurance that their petition would be considered in right earnest.

"We resorted to demonstration since our pleas to the PWD officials and local Minister went unheeded for a month," Mr. Velayutham said.

Death threats do not deter this farmer

A woman has been fighting against illicit sand mining

TIRUNELVELI, February 18, 2014 - A farmer hailing from the western part of the district has been running from pillar to post to stop illegal sand quarrying near her village for the past four years.

The poor farmer says that due to the lackadaisical attitude of the officials, minerals worth more than Rs.15 crore have been plundered.

After getting permit from the Department of Mines to take red soil from a government poramboke land near Kadayam Perumpaththu village under Ambasamudam taluk, a sand miner from East Kadayam is allegedly quarrying red soil from a nearby patta land besides carrying out mining activities in the permitted area.

“When I tried to stop this by informing the police, the law-enforcers foisted cases against me, and hence I had to obtain anticipatory bails on a couple of occasions. The complaints preferred by me regarding the death threats issued by the illicit sand miner are not registered. Hence, I started petitioning the Collector, which have also not produced any favourable results,” said M. Raja Saraswathi, who submitted a petition to Collector M. Karunakaran on Monday in this connection.

Photographs submitted by Ms.Saraswathi, along with her petition to the Collector, in support of her claim clearly show the extensive area that has been illegally mined.

“After illegal sand quarrying started near our village, groundwater has gone down alarmingly,” said Ms.Saraswathi, who has sent 24 petitions through registered post and fax so far to the Collector between April 24, 2010 and August 23, 2013. Moreover, she has also forwarded similar complaints to the Sub-Collector, Cheranmahadevi, and the Assistant Director of Mines and is waiting for some visible action against illicit sand mining.

Coordinated farm activity sought in PAP region

Steps to prevent potential water conflict, ensure availability

PALAKKAD, February 18, 2014 - Farmers in the district have called upon the State government to take steps to ensure more water from Tamil Nadu under the inter-State Parambikulam-Aliyar Project (PAP) agreement to save the standing paddy crop in the Chitturpuzha irrigation project area.

The scarcity of water makes the second paddy crop a difficult proposition for farmers in Chittur. Water conflicts are severe every summer in Palakkad, especially in Chittur taluk. Sources say the sustenance of the river-based ecosystem is vital to the ecological health of the region.

Inadequate water storage facilities and the lack of coordinated agricultural activities add to the problem. The region depends mainly on PAP waters released as per the inter-State agreement between Kerala and Tamil Nadu. In a water year (July 1 to June 30), 7.25 tmc ft of water is released for irrigation purposes in the Chitturpuzha valley under the pact to compensate for the diversion of the waters of Bharathpuzha that was flowing into Chitturpuzha earlier.

Use of water

This water is used to irrigate the first and second crops of paddy in the Chitturpuzha valley. Of late, even during years of good monsoon, the share of PAP water has become insufficient to irrigate the two crops. This had created tension as farmers started resorting to agitations for water.

The PAP agreement has a specific pattern of supply to meet irrigation requirements. This pattern of supply was modified by the Joint Water Regulatory Board (interstate body responsible for the monitoring and management of PAP).

But, the total quantity to be supplied in a water year remains the same at 7.25 tmc ft, says Sudheer Padikkal, Deputy Director, JWRB.

By coordinating agricultural activity in this belt, the shortage felt during the end of a water year can be properly managed, he says.

This has to be done as per an agriculture calendar and all farmers have to stick to this schedule. The first crop period should be June – September. The second crop period should be from October to January. The seeds to be used by farmers should be apt for the short duration (four months), Mr. Padikkal says.

Mismatch

By rearranging the agriculture calendar and using short-duration crop, the availability of sufficient water can be ensured, Mr. Padikkal says.

Now, there is a mismatch of cropping period between farmers at the head and tail ends of the canal. Also, farmers are using long-duration seeds. This leads to the harvest of the

second crop in March. This situation is counterproductive to the efficient management of PAP waters. If the two crops of this belt are synchronised to match the proposed period, there will be sufficient water during the February - May period, he said. The draft agriculture policy of the State government emphasises the need for a perfect agriculture calendar, he says.

📌 **Rearrangement of farm calendar proposed**

📌 **Use of short-duration crop seeds sought**

Farmer-scientist interface at KAU

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, February 18, 2014 - Selected farmers from the three southern districts will interact with agricultural experts, scientists and officials from the Agriculture Department at an interface programme organised as part of the 31st Zonal Research Extension Advisory Council meeting of the Kerala Agricultural University here on Tuesday. The programme to be held at the College of Agriculture, Vellayani, will offer an opportunity for farmers from Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam and Pathanamthitta to highlight their problems and seek technical solutions from agricultural experts.

S. Devanesan, Associate Director of Research, KAU, said the programme would also help the university to chart out priorities for research activities.

The workshop to be held as part of the meeting will evaluate the projects taken up by the Regional Research Centre, KAU. Dr. Devanesan said the workshop would also seek to enable the transfer of technology from the university to the farmers.

Director of Agriculture R. Ajithkumar is scheduled to inaugurate the ZREAC meeting. Director of Research, KAU, T. R. Gopalakrishnan will preside over the function and Director, State Horticulture Mission K. Prathapan will deliver the keynote address.

Distressed tomato farmers see red

CHITTOOR, February 18, 2014 - Tomato farmers of the western mandals in the tail-end Chittoor district are a distressed lot due to the tumbling prices in the market.

Though they bring tonnes of tomatoes to the local markets at Madanapalle and Palamaner, they return almost empty-handed and many a time they are forced to borrow small cash from traders towards bus fares to return to their villages.

The price per kg which was Rs.12 in January had plummeted to Rs.1.50 (one rupee fifty paise) some days a month ago and the situation is set to worsen with the price threatening to touch a rupee or even less. This is in contrast to the high price tag the product enjoyed in the fag-end of last year. The product was sold at Rs.40 per kg in the open market and about forty mandis in Madanapalle alone traded over 600 tonnes a day.

Tomato is cultivated in about ten thousand hectares in Madanapalle division and the vegetable is praised for its quality in several parts of South India. Bumper crop coupled with tough competition from Dindigul, Hosur and Krishnagiri blocks of Tamil Nadu have proved detrimental to the fortunes of domestic farmers. Since two days, the farmers have been dumping several tonnes of tomatoes at the market yard premises as there were no takers at the mandis (trading units). Farmers are finding themselves in a piquant situation as the product cannot be stocked as it is perishable. A merchant at Madeena tomato mandi in Madanapalle told *The Hindu* that with steep fall in the prices, their commission is negligible. "The farmers borrow money not only for cultivation but also for labour and transportation and they end up in debts due to negligible profit. They borrow money from us for bus charges. We really pity them," he added.

Meanwhile, the tomato prices elsewhere in the district stood between Rs.3 and 4 at various local vegetable markets. Initially, there was mad rush from the public, but now the demand disappeared and the traders too are preferring to stop the purchases for the next few days. Now the farmers are leaving the stocks in forest locations for animals such as antelopes, monkeys and wild boars to feed on “Instead of leaving the product to rot in the market yard it is better we feed these animals,” is the common refrain of the farmers

Poultry sector seeks agriculture status

MANDYA, February 18, 2014 - Demanding that the State government accord the status of agriculture to poultry industry, members of the Karnataka State Poultry Farmers' Welfare Association staged a protest outside the Deputy Commissioner's office here on Monday. A group of poultry farmers marched to the protest venue from the Bangalore-Mysore Highway near Sir M. Visvesvaraya statue.

The farmers demanded that the benefits given by the State government to the sericulture industry should be extended to poultry farmers.

They said that there are around 6,000 poultry farms in the State and at least two lakh people are dependent on poultry farming for their livelihood. As the industry was neither considered under the animal husbandry nor agriculture, the dependents were being denied loans and power subsidy from the authorities, they said.

The poultry farmers have been demanding the status of agriculture to poultry farming for the past several years. However, the government has been neglecting their demands, they alleged.

The governments in Gujarat, Haryana and Punjab have been providing subsidies and other facilities to poultry farming. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah should take such measures to revive poultry sector in the State, they demanded.

The protesters also urged the government to provide water and power subsidy to the industry.

They submitted a memorandum to Mr. Siddaramaiah, through the Deputy Commissioner.

☐ ***'Benefits given by government to sericulture industry should be extended to poultry farmers'***

☐ ***Chief Minister urged to revive poultry sector in State***

Agri sector gets richer

District panchayat budget presented

KOZHICODE, February 18, 2014 - Agriculture sector has been given top priority in the 2014-15 budget of the Kozhikode district panchayat.

The budget, presented by district panchayat vice president R. Sasi, set aside a sum of Rs.6.4 crore for completing the Kole land development schemes at Avalappandi, Cherandathoorchira, and Thulattunada.

A sum of Rs.83 lakh has also been allotted for construction of check-dams and canals for converting other shallow areas in the district to cultivable lands.

Paddy cultivation

The district panchayat will work out a scheme with the cooperation of grama panchayats and block panchayats for enhancing paddy cultivation. Rs.5 lakh has been envisaged for this scheme.

The local body has also allotted a sum of Rs.20 lakh for developing cultivation of hybrid coconut trees and encouraging organic plantain cultivation.

The budget also has set aside Rs.2 lakh for promoting vegetable cultivation with the assistance of Kudumabasree volunteers. The scheme is expected to help tide over the crisis in the wake of increasing prices of vegetables.

Seminars

Agricultural seminars will be organised at the taluk levels for promoting farming among the new generation with an allocation of Rs.7.5 lakh. Another budget share of Rs.4 lakh will be used to involve 10 grama panchayats in a project to promote mushroom farming at Perumanna.

Various farms in the district will get an infrastructure boost with an allotment of Rs.97 lakh. The budget has also earmarked Rs.50 lakh for a proposal to take the Ksheeragramam project to more grama panchayats.

Improving infrastructure at the Chathamaganam poultry farm also finds mention in the budget with Rs.1.08 crore allocated for the same. Also, a sum of Rs.5 lakh each would be allotted under the Muttagramam project for Chathamaganam, Mavoor, Mukkom, Peruvayil, and Kunnamangalam grama panchayats.

Along with developing agriculture sector, the budget has also focused on environment protection.

An amount of Rs.10.21 crore has been set aside for welfare of Scheduled Caste and Rs.45 lakh for Scheduled Tribes. It has been proposed to provide palliative care centres Rs.1.46 crore for purchasing physiotherapy equipment.

📌 **Rs.83 lakh for building check-dams**

📌 **Environmental protection gets focus**

Water sought to save crop

Farmers allege poor water management by officials



TIRUNELVELI, February 18, 2014 - Farmers deplore that paddy crop cultivated on 1,500 acre is withering due to poor water management by the official machinery even as water has been still flowing in the Palayam Channel since last November.

The Naduvaikurichi tank, Udaiyaarkulam, Karunaperi tank, Uththarankulam, Ariyakulam, Sirukulam, Paaraikulam,

Piththanaerikulam and Notchikulam, which are being fed by the Palayam channel, provide succour to paddy crop cultivated on over 1,500 acres.

While the standing crop is expected to be ready for harvest by mid-March, release of water from the Palayam Channel to these tanks has been stopped abruptly without any notification.

“Farmers are forced to use diesel pumps to supply water to the standing crop. Since the tanks are bone-dry now, the standing paddy crop, which would have been ready for harvest around mid-March, is withering,” said M. Shanmugasundaramani of Ariyakulam.

Holding dry paddy, a group of farmers from the affected areas submitted a petition to Collector M. Karunakaran on Monday seeking immediate release of water to the tanks from Palayam Channel.

“The crop is gradually dying,” said M. Petchimuthu of Naduvaikurichi.

The farmers alleged that their earlier petitions to the Public Works Department officials were yet to get any positive results.

Urumankulam panchayat ward member M. Vaikundaraj of Perunkulam, in his petition, urged the Collector to check ongoing illicit sand mining on the Nambiyar riverbed.

He said more than 20 lorries and over 50 bullock carts were used for illegal sand quarrying. While the infiltration wells sunk on the riverbed had been damaged badly due to the sand mining, those who informed the police about this crime were being threatened by the sand mafia, he said.

“One of the panchayat presidents from this region is behind the sand mining and he was sending sand to the neighbouring Kanayakumari district where it is being sold at a premium,” the petitioner said.

Give spot receipts, maize centres told

CHITRADURGA, February 18, 2014 - Challakere MLA T. Raghumurthy has instructed the officers of the Maize Procurement Centre at Chitradurga APMC to immediately provide the receipts for the maize purchased from the farmers in the centre and take up the responsibility to protect the maize bags till they are loaded to trucks.

Speaking after visiting maize procurement centre here on Monday, the MLA said the farmers should not be made to stay in the centre premises to protect the produce. “Once the maize is purchased from the farmers, it’s the responsibility of the officers concerned to ensure that the bags are kept safely and immediate steps should be taken to load them to trucks,” he said.

The farmers complained they were forced to stay at the centre to protect their supplies and staying on the premises of APMC was difficult owing to improper facilities for toilets and drinking water.

They alleged the officers concerned were making inordinate delays in issuing the receipts and in some cases the quantity mentioned in the receipts was much lesser than the quantity supplied by the farmers, the farmers said.

Warehouse worries

The Food and Civil Supplies Department Deputy Director Shivanna said the centre had purchased a total of 3 lakh quintals of maize from the farmers and the produce had been stored in warehouses in Chitradurga, Challakere and Hiriya taluks. Since the capacity of warehouses is only 2 lakh tonnes, the remaining one lakh tonne has been stored in Vani Vilas Sugar Factory store house. Further procurements could be moved to warehouses in Nelamangala, he said.

The farmers also demanded the last date for purchasing the maize should be extended to March 31 from February 28. Mr. Raghumurthy told the farmers the issue would be taken up with Deputy Commissioner V.P. Ikkeri and measures would be taken to sort out other problems of the farmers.

Cattle owners can now get fodder for Rs.2 a kg

Fodder depot for marketing dry grass opened at Keeranur



Support:N.Subramanian, Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, and C.Vijayabaskar, Minister for Health, at the inauguration of fodder depot at Keeranur in Pudukottai district on Monday.

PUDUKOTTAI, February 18, 2014 - -

Fodder depot for marketing dry grass (hay) to cattle owners was inaugurated at Keeranur near here on Monday.

This is one of the seven depots sanctioned for the district with the other six being Gandarvakottai, Alangudi, Tirumayam, Viralimalai, Aranthangi and Ponnamaravathy. The drive aims at ensuring adequate supply of dry grass to livestock owners at a fair price, said N.Subramanian, Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, who inaugurated the sale at the depot.

C.Vijayabaskar, Minister for Health, in his address, said that a sum of Rs.70 lakh has been sanctioned for procuring dry grass at the rate of Rs.10 lakh for each depot.

K.Mahalingam, Regional Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, said that the fodder would be sold for a price of Rs. 2 a kg for a maximum of 15 kg per day at the rate of three kg per cattle.

Transplantation technique in red gram pays rich dividend

PUDUKOTTAI, February 18, 2014 - Red gram cultivation in the district has witnessed a turnaround, thanks to the innovative cultivation practices introduced by the Agriculture Department in five blocks.

Against the conventional practice of cultivating red grams as a fallow crop, the department has introduced transplanting technique on an area of 210 hectares in Pudukottai, Gandarvakottai, Karambakudi, Tiruvarangulam, and Kundrandarkovil blocks, with 42 hectares in each block.

The department introduced two varieties: Co RG 7 and Co RG 6 with duration of 135 days and 180 days respectively, including the 15 days needed for raising the nurseries, said S.M.Shahjehan, Joint Director of Agriculture. The harvest in the fields of E.Esthagi of Venkatakulam village near here was conducted on Monday and the farmer had raised 'Co RG 6' in an area of one acre under the frontline demonstration programme of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Vamban. "Harvest from one acre was 800 kg of red gram, which is equivalent to 2 tonnes a hectare," said R.M. Sivakumar, Assistant Director of Agriculture. Under conventional method, farmers could harvest only 400 kg a hectare. M. Kathiravan and S. Mathiazhagan, scientists from KVK, Vamban, said the crops are susceptible to pod-borer attack and recommended chemical fertilizer to control the disease.

V. Vaithianathan, Assistant Director of Agriculture (Seed Certification), said that agriculture department would purchase red gram seeds with a special incentive of Rs.30 a kg over and above the procurement price.

Entrepreneurship training

TIRUCHI, February 18, 2014 - Thirty prospective entrepreneurs are undergoing an entrepreneurship training programme under the National Mission on Food Processing in the district.

The national mission seeks to promote business ventures in post-harvest operation, food processing, and value addition in agriculture and horticulture produce. In Tiruchi district, the training is being provided through Gramalaya, a voluntary organisation. Officials from various departments are being briefed on various aspects of food processing and agro business. Demonstrations are being organised on manufacture of value-added products of banana, tomato, fenugreek, onion, and minor millets as part of the programme.

— Special Correspondent

Seafood export sees an upward swing

TUTICORIN, February 18, 2014 - The rising trend of aquaculture has been significantly contributing to seafood export. With emerging technology, the pathogen-free shrimp species *Litopenaeus vannamei*, which is being cultured in brackish water by fish farmers, is playing a major role in seafood exports, according to A. Ansar Ali, Deputy Director of the Marine Products Export Development Authority (MPEDA), Tuticorin.

With an export target of 4.3 billion dollars for 2013-14, the seafood exports made through V.O. Chidambaranar Port here witnessed an increasing trend in the first half of this fiscal. Its export volume increased by 28 per cent in terms of quantity and 64 per cent in value of dollars over the corresponding period last year, Dr. Ali told *The Hindu* here on Monday. Around 4, 000 tonnes of seafood shipments had been increased. Since September 2013, frozen shrimps (*vannamei* shrimp) had become the principal export item in marine products. With an increased catch of *vannamei* shrimp, quality control measures and development of infrastructure for production of value-added items, the MPEDA could reach the target, he hoped.

He said the increased stock density of *vannamei* shrimp in farms, resulted in a substantial boost in production. Moreover, the high value shrimp could also be cultured in a short period. Hence, farmers had preferred culturing *vannamei* shrimp to black tiger shrimp, the earlier export variety, Dr. Ali added.

D. Durairaj, president, Tamil Nadu Seafood Exporters Association, Tamil Nadu region, when contacted, said on fisheries production, exporters had been largely banking on aquaculture, which contributes 70 per cent and the rest by capture fisheries.

In Tamil Nadu, this shore based aquaculture activity was being primarily witnessed in Pattukottai, Nagapattinam, Sirkali and also partially in Tuticorin and Ramanathapuram. But the farmers had benefitted more than exporters, who earn a marginal profit and incur an expenditure of Rs.125 on exporting every kilo of shrimps. Besides, duty drawback rates for the exporters had also been slashed to 3.3 per cent against five per cent, which existed two years ago, Mr. Durairaj said.

With 20 exporting companies across Tamil Nadu, the seafood industry began to focus on *vannamei* shrimp production, he said.

C.B.T. Rajagopalsamy, Professor and Head, Department of Inland Aquaculture, Fisheries College and Research Institute, Tuticorin, said this species could attain marketable size of 20 grams within a period of 130 to 160 days.

Pathogen-free shrimp species Litopenaeus vannamei is playing a major role in seafood exports

Water level

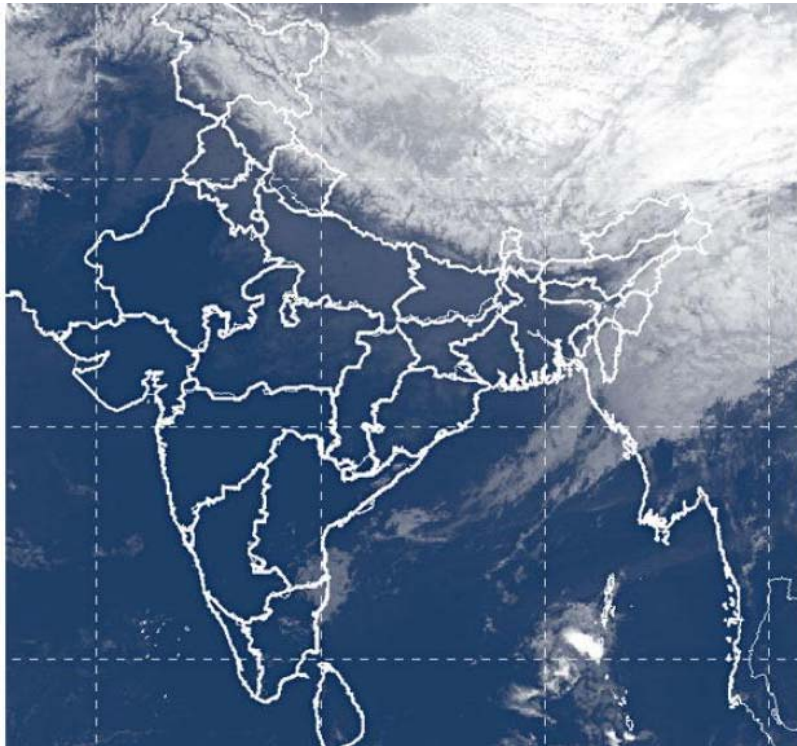
Mettur - The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 50.81 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 168 cusecs and the discharge, 600 cusecs. — Special Correspondent

Water level in the **Papanasam dam** on Monday stood at 60.10 feet (maximum level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 163.77 cusecs and 604.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The water level in **Manimuthar dam** stood at 77 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 12 cusecs and 530 cusecs of water was discharged.

Kanyakumari - The water level in Pechipparai dam stood at 14.15 feet, 43.80 feet in Perunchani, 5.25 feet in Chittar 15.34 feet in Chittar 113.80 feet in Poigai and 54.12 feet in Mamabazathuraiyaru.

Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on February 17.



Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Cloudy

Rain: 0
Humidity: 74
Wind: normal

Tuesday, Feb 18

Max 29° | Min 24°

Sunrise: 06:30
Sunset: 06:15
Barometer: 1016

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Wednesday, Feb 19

Max 30° | Min 24°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday
Feb 20



30° | 23°
Partly Cloudy

Friday
Feb 21



26° | 23°
Overcast

Saturday
Feb 22



25° | 23°
Overcast

Sunday
Feb 23



24° | 22°
Cloudy

Monday
Feb 24



25° | 22°
Overcast

Parkash Badal turns down suggestion for withdrawing free power to agri sector

Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal on Monday refused to accept the suggestion of reviewing his government's decision of giving free power to the agriculture sector.

He was reacting to the suggestion from world renowned rice breeder Dr GS Khush, who on the opening day of the four-day agriculture summit organised by the state government on Sunday, had suggested this to conserve water, the most precious natural resource available with the state.

"The withdrawal of free power to the agriculture sector is not possible; this is the little our government is doing for the farmers," Badal said, reacting to a query from mediapersons. He said his government was spending around Rs. 6,000 crore annually for giving free power to the agriculture sector.

Not only Dr Khush, but also other agricultural experts say free power to tube-wells is leading to fast depletion of subsoil water and should be stopped immediately. Dr Khush suggested supporting farmers in the form of technology and other forms of direct subsidy. He had asked the Punjab government to install drip irrigation system which could save about 30% of the total water consumption.

Shifting onus on to the Centre, Badal said there was no support coming from the Centre. "All funds are with the Centre; though agriculture is a state subject, the states have no control," said Badal. He reiterated his demand for a separate agriculture budget. Badal said farmers in Punjab were under huge debt and excessive debt could lead to a law-and-order problem.

He refused to accept that he could be the future prime minister as proposed by one of the ministers from Bihar during his address on Sunday. "I won't go out of Punjab at any cost," he announced a day later, talking to reporters.

51 agri-scientists, experts, researchers honoured

On the occasion, Badal honoured 51 scientists and researchers in different fields of agriculture. Those honoured include Prof MS Swaminathan, called the Father of Green Revolution; rice breeder Dr Gurdev Singh Khush; Dr Boombala, soil scientist; Dr GS Kalkat, agriculture scientist and chairman of Punjab State Farmers Commission; director general, Indian Council of Agricultural Research, Dr S Ayyapan; Dr Deepak Pental, genetist from Delhi University; Thomas Lumpkin from international maize and wheat centre; Dr AS Khera, plant breeder; former PAU V-C Dr Khem Singh Gill; and Dr GS Kang, potato breeder.

Pak Punjab governor visits summit

Governor of Pakistan Punjab Mohammed Sarwar and deputy high commissioner of Pakistan Mansoor Khan visited the agriculture summit on Monday. During a meeting with them, chief minister Parkash Singh Badal sought help for sending good breeds of high-yielding varieties of livestock, including Sahiwal cow, Nili Ravi buffalo and goat breeds to India. The chief minister, accompanied by the governor, took a round of the livestock exhibition.

Unions slam agriculture summit sans small farmers

AMRITSAR: Claiming that the ongoing [Progressive Punjab Agriculture Summit](#), being held at Mohali, has ignored the farmers and their organizations in the state, farmers' leaders have blamed the state government for alleged corporatization of farming in Punjab at the cost of [small farmers](#). They have dubbed the summit as an attempt to gain publicity and make exaggerated claims, to fleece the farmers ahead of Lok Sabha elections.

"It is a show-of for elections and an attempt to commercialise and corporatise state's farming while ignoring the interests of poor farmers, to appease a few corporate houses," alleged state president of Jamhauri Kissan Sabha, Satnam Singh Ajnala, on Monday. Bereft of small and medium agriculturists and their unions, the summit was full of politicians, he said.

"The government should have invited representatives of every union in the state and consulted them and made announcements for their welfare, rather than inviting rich and influential businessmen who only exploit farmers," he said.

The summit would have been a milestone if chief minister [Parkash Singh Badal](#) had announced interest-free agriculture credit, he said.

General secretary of Border Area Sangarash Committee, Rattan Singh Randhawa, said that over 70% farmers in the state were with small land holdings, who were debt ridden.

State president of Kissan Sangarash Committee, Satnam Singh Pannu, said that if the government takes decisions which were not in favour of the state's farmers, they would be forced to launch an agitation. "The government can't take decisions by itself without consulting grass roots level farmers and their organizations," he said.

THE HINDU Business Line

Export tax on crude palm oil hits vegoils import

Mumbai, February 17: Import of vegetable oil slipped 22 per cent in January to 9,05,814 tonnes against 11,57,130 tonnes due to the inverted duty structure followed by exporting countries.

Skewed duty

In a bid to encourage local refining, exporting countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia have hiked duty on crude oils compared to refined oils.

This had squeezed margins of Indian refiners who import crude vegetable oil and sell them the in domestic market after refining it.

Import of refined palmolein increased to 2.08 lakh tonnes in January against 1.64 lakh tonnes in the previous month, while crude palmolein import fell to 3.4 lakh tonnes from 6.92 lakh tonnes.

This was largely due to refined palmolein (a finished product) being sold \$15-20 a tonne lower compared to crude palmolein, the raw material.

Before the inverted export duty was imposed by Indonesia, refined palmolein used to be sold at least \$60-80 a tonne higher than crude palmolein which was giving some comfort level to Indian refiners to import and process CPO.

In view of increased import of refined palmolein in the last two years, capacity utilisation of domestic refiners have dropped from 55-60 per cent to 30-35 per cent and many units closed down or are on the verge of closure, said the Solvent Extractors' Association of India. Vegetable oil imports in January consisted of 8,71,527 tonnes of edible oils and 34,287 tonnes on non-edible oils.

'Take up ultra-high density cashew farming to boost output'



Mangalore, February 17: An expert on cashew cultivation has stressed the need to focus on ultra-high density cashew farming to increase production in the country.

Speaking at the 'cashew field day', organised by the Agriculture and Horticulture Research Station at Ullal in Mangalore taluk on Saturday, Gangadhar Nayak, Principal Scientist (Horticulture), Directorate of Cashew Research at Puttur in Dakshina Kannada district, said that though the demand for cashew in the country is around 15 lakh tonnes a year,

the country produces around 7 lakh tonnes.

Stating that some cashew-producing nations have started processing industries, he said it would lead to further demand for cashew processing units in India.

Considering this, there is a need for intensive cashew cropping pattern in the country.

Highlighting the method of ultra-high density cashew farming, he said around 450 plants can be grown in an acre of land.

According to Nayak, in ultra-high density farming, they can plant many trees in an acre compared to the traditional system. In traditional system, farmers plant trees in 8 metres x 8 metres distance. This will help plant around 80 trees an acre.

India overtakes Canada as 4th largest country growing GM crops

Rising global area of GM crops					(In million hectares)
	2010	2011	2012	2013	Crops
USA	66.8	69	69.5	70.1	Maize, soybean, cotton, sugarbeet, papaya, squash, canola
Brazil	25.4	30.3	36.6	40.3	Soybean, maize, cotton
Argentina	22.9	23.7	23.9	24.4	Soybean, maize, cotton
India	9.4	10.6	10.8	11	Cotton
Canada	8.8	10.4	11.6	10.8	Canola, maize, soybean, sugarbeet
China	3.5	3.9	4.0	4.2	Cotton, papaya, poplar, tomato, sweet pepper
Total*	148	168	179.3	175.2	

*Includes 22 other countries such as Paraguay, South Africa, Pakistan and Uruguay. Source: ICRISAT

New Delhi, February 17: India has overtaken Canada to emerge as the fourth largest country to grow biotech or genetically modified (GM) crops in 2013 as farmers here planted Bt cotton in about 11 million hectares.

In the previous year, farmers in India had planted Bt cotton — the only approved GM crop for commercial cultivation — in about 10.8 m ha.

The global acreages under GM crops continued to expand through 2013, albeit at a sluggish pace of around 3 per cent. Acreage under GM crops increased to 175.2 million hectares in 2013, about five million hectares more than last year, according to the International Service for Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) that tracks the GM acreages.

The US continued to be the largest country under GM crops, accounting for 40 per cent of the total planted area globally.

The GM acreage in Brazil expanded at a faster pace last year compared to other countries, followed by Argentina.

While Egypt has stopped planting GM crops, reducing the total number of countries to 27, countries such as Canada saw a decline in area.

Of the 27 countries that planted GM crops last year, 19 were developing nations and eight were industrialised countries.

Developing nations planted more GM crops than their developed counterparts the second consecutive year with farmers in Latin America, Asia and Africa accounting for 54 per cent of the 175 million hectares.

Bangladesh approved the commercial planting of Bt brinjal, while the situation in Egypt put planting on-hold, pending a Government review, ISAAA said. Panama and Indonesia were two other nations that approved cultivation of biotech crops.

About 18 million farmers planted the biotech crops in 2013 compared with 17.3 million in 2012. Besides economic gains, farmers benefited enormously from at least a 50 per cent reduction in the number of insecticide applications.

In the European Union, five nations — Spain, Portugal, Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia — planted 15 per cent more area than last year at 1.48 lakh hectares under Bt maize.

Banas Dairy to set up processing unit at Faridabad

Ahmedabad, February 17: Banaskantha District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Ltd (Banas Dairy), the largest member union of Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd, (GCMMF), on Monday said it will establish its first milk processing plant outside Gujarat at Faridabad, Haryana, part of the National Capital Region.

Banas Dairy plans to invest nearly Rs. 300 crore for creating milk processing facility at Faridabad. The plant will manufacture products such as pouched milk, curd, butter milk and ice cream under the brand name of Amul, a GCMMF official said here.

The foundation stone laying ceremony for the plant, having a capacity to process 10 lakh litres of milk daily, was held on Monday. This is the fourth plant in NCR for member unions of GCMMF. Earlier, the Mehsana District Cooperarive Milk Producers' Union Ltd (Dudhsagar Dairy) had set up two plants at Manesar and Dharuhera while the Sabarkantha District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union Ltd (Sabar Dairy) had set up a plant at Rohtak.

Amul is the largest selling brand of milk in the Delhi and NCR region with daily sales of 25 lakh litres, which is expected to increase by 10-15 per cent annually during next the 5-7 years.

Banas Dairy procures milk from more than 3.5 lakh milk producer members of Banaskantha district.

Sellers keep off rubber market

Kottayam, February 17: Domestic rubber prices flared up further on Monday.

According to reports, the Kerala Cabinet meeting scheduled for Wednesday will take a decision regarding the implementation of the rubber procurement.

The market expects the process to commence immediately following this and hence, there were no sellers in the market even at higher levels.

Sheet rubber flared up Rs. 156 (Rs. 152) a kg, according to traders.

The grade firmed up to Rs. 154 (Rs. 151) and Rs. 151 (Rs. 148) respectively, according to the Rubber Board and dealers.

The March futures improved to Rs. 157.80 (Rs. 154.16), April to Rs. 162.30 (Rs. 158.08), May to Rs. 164.75 (Rs.160.48), June to Rs. 166.09 (Rs. 161.78) and July to Rs. 164.99 (Rs. 163) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) closed firm at Rs. 135.35 (Rs. 133.73) at Bangkok. February futures closed at ¥ 230 (Rs.139.62) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) RSS-4: 156 (152); RSS-5: 153 (149); Ungraded: 150 (146); ISNR 20: 151 (146) and Latex 60 per cent: 122 (120.50).

Logistical hurdles drive up oats

Last week's top 5		(in %)	
Gainers		Losers	
Ethanol	9.75 ▲	Natural gas	5.78 ▼
Silver	6.14 ▲	Wool	1.52 ▼
Oats	5.25 ▲	Corn	1.51 ▼
Wheat	4.64 ▲	Coal	0.71 ▼
Gold	4.26 ▲	Coffee	0.13 ▼

Source: Trading Economics

With cold weather curtailing rail transport, exports to the US from Canada get hit

February 17: One of the surprising gainers in the commodities market since the beginning of the year has been oats. Though not traded in futures exchanges

in India, it is widely traded on the Chicago Board of Trade.

Oats gained 5.25 per cent last week and in the last 12 months, the commodity is up 8.28 per cent.

On Monday, oats futures maturing for delivery in May on Chicago Board of Trade ruled at \$3.88 a bushel.

Prices had actually run to record high of \$4.63 (for March futures) in the first week and even topped corn before dropping sharply. Though they are nowhere near the record levels, prices still gained last week.

Weather woes

The problem with oats is not production but transportation, especially due to the current cold spell in North America.

During the current season to June, global oats production is projected to rise over 11 per cent to 23.80 million tonnes (mt). Output in the European Union, the largest producer, is set to rise seven per cent to 8.63 mt and that of Russia to 4.92 mt. Canada, the third largest producer, is likely to produce 3.9 mt, a five-year high.

The current rally is because supply of oats from Canada to the US has been hit by logistical problems.

Cold weather accompanied by snowfall in January and this month has resulted in rail firms cutting trains' journey and slowing movement of commodities, particularly crude oil and grains in Canada.

Rising US imports

The problem for Canada has been aggravated by record wheat and canola (rapeseed) crops, flooding the Canadian National Railway Company and Canadian Pacific Ltd with orders. This

has resulted in shortage of nearly 50,000 rail cars required to move agriculture produce to the ports or the US.

US imports over 50 per cent of the 160 million bushels of oats it consumes every year for breakfast, snacks and as feed for horses. Oats are now being used in pig diets to help overcome a deadly pig virus Porcine Epidemic Diarrhoea. This has led to demand rising for the coarse grain. Most of the oats imports are made from Canada.

Analysts say that problems in transportation of grains have got aggravated since grains have not been accorded priority in getting rail cars. This is because grains transportation isn't the highest revenue earner for these rail companies. Again within grains, oats are not given the top priority.

Supply shortage is expected to last for some more time in the short-term until Canada gets its rail logistics right. With winter storm Quintus strengthening and additional snowfall forecast in Canada and the US, the rally in oats may continue.

Poor upcountry demand takes sheen off turmeric

Erode, February 17: POOR UPCOUNTRY DEMAND FOR TURMERIC

Spot turmeric prices in Erode markets ruled unchanged due to poor upcountry demand. Further, the price of the hybrid finger turmeric was up Rs. 400 due to arrival of quality produce. Prices were Rs. 8,199, the highest price this year. But other varieties decreased by Rs. 100 a quintal. The new crop also decreased by Rs. 100 a quintal. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association Sales yard, the finger variety (new crop) sold at Rs. 5,889-6,814 and the root variety Rs. 4,864-6,639. The finger variety (old crop) was sold at Rs. 4,880-6,814 and the root variety Rs. 4,399-6,499 a quintal. The finger variety fetched Rs. 6,199-8,199; the root variety Rs. 5,909-6,809. Of the 740 bags that arrived, 216 were sold. Our Correspondent

Business Standard

Political opportunism remains bane of sugar sector

[UNICA](#), the Brazilian sugar-cane sector association, has come down hard on India for extending support to our producers to export four million tonnes (mt) of sugar through the next two years. Considering the distressing state of the world [sugar market](#), which has seen a sharp fall in prices of late, and the Brazilian sector's paramount dependence on exports, the fact the UNICA has decried the export push is understandable.

Brazil, the world's largest producer and exporter, accounts for half the global trade. Whatever UNICA may have against India exporting to the world market, deluged by supplies from other sources, it is only after considerable deliberation that New Delhi has decided to extend a subsidy of Rs 3,500 a tonne for raw sugar exports. This is despite our mills geared to make white sugar. The primary concern of all three senior ministers was to ensure the subsidy was in line with the World Trade Organization norms. To be able to participate in exports, our shore-based factories will have to make suitable changes in the manufacturing system for the raw commodity. The subsidy of Rs 1,400 crore will be borne by the [Sugar Development Fund](#) and the exchequer. Agriculture Minister [Sharad Pawar](#) reckons the

subsidy will not fully cover the premium the Indian material enjoys here over world prices.

Officials from the sector said what UNICA hadn't conveniently taken into account was the damage inflicted on our sugar economy by imports of 3.1 mt, raw and white combined, during the season ended September. Imports were mostly from Brazil. Such large imports come at a time when India has had four consecutive bumper production years, including the current season. No one will contest the compulsion of our port-based refineries to import raws for processing and then export as white. The problem arises because the much-proven grain-to-grain import-export practice has ceased to be in vogue. More, exports of foreign-origin raws processed into white should happen much ahead of the now-allowed 18-month period. When factories have to contend with overflowing stocks, circulation of any amount of foreign sugar could further damage the weak market sentiment.

"Export subsidy should be read as government acknowledgement of the deluge of stocks and the consequent low prices have led to the sector having its back to the wall. As exports of four mt of raws will aid the sector in a major way, imports need to be discouraged by raising duty from 15 per cent to at least 40 per cent. Is there any rationale of supporting growers in other countries when cane bill payment dues of factories here have crossed Rs 10,000 crore, including dues from the last season?" asks Om Prakash Dhanuka, former president of the Indian Sugar Mills Association (Isma).

To enable factories to clear cane bills, in December, the government asked banks to extend interest-free loans of Rs 6,600 crore. But as a whole, the sector has become so financially weak that most of its constituents do not stand a chance to get loans under the mandated conditions. The package will remain a non-starter unless conditions are relaxed. Hopefully, the urgency to settle bills will lead the government to consider Isma suggestions on the modification of terms. Director-General Abinash Verma says in case the new line of credit remains in limbo, factories could run up bills of up to Rs 18,000 crore by March-end. Earlier, M Srinivasan, ex-president, said if sugar prices didn't improve, dues would be Rs 20,000 crore by April-end. This is a recipe for an outburst in the growing regions. The unrest is building when the country is getting ready for elections. About 50 million grow cane.

Why has the non-payment of bills become a regular feature with our sector, unlike in Brazil, Thailand and Australia? According to Srinivasan, all these are spared the pains felt by India because they opted for a linkage between cane and sugar prices. Not only has the formula benefited growers and factories in equal measure, it is also the reason for varietal improvement in cane through tissue culture and a rise in sugar recovery from cane.

Here, in spite of the Rangarajan committee saying value-sharing of sugar and by-products such as bagasse and press mud in 75:25 between farmers and factories will usher "stability in the payment of dues", New Delhi is yet to implement it.

The Centre has taken the stand linkage formula introduction will have to await a consensus among growing states. Unfortunately, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab, which have made it a habit to load big premia on centrally-decided 'fair and remunerative' prices to please farmers, are wary on value-sharing. But as mounting bills will show, farmers are paying a heavy price for the injudiciousness of states.

Rice stocks gain on relief in service tax

Shares of rice manufacturers today rose by as much as 5% after Finance Minister P Chidambaram gave some relief in service tax for rice warehousing and storage.

[Chaman Lal Setia Exports](#)' scrip surged 4.60%, while [KRBL](#) rose by 1.32% and [Usher Agro](#) gained 0.29% on the [BSE](#).

The Finance Minister today announced service tax would be abolished on rice from the staple's loading to storage stage.

Rice was originally exempt from service tax. However, later the [Finance Ministry](#) had said that only paddy is agri-produce, while rice is a processed item.

Presenting the interim budget for 2014-15 fiscal, Chidambaram said: "By virtue of the definition of 'agricultural produce' in Finance Act 2012, read with the Negative List, storage or warehousing of paddy was excluded from the levy of service tax. Rice was not.

"The distinction is somewhat artificial. Hence, I propose to exempt loading, unloading, packing, storage and warehousing of rice from service tax.

Mustardseed slips 1% on selling pressure

[Mustardseed](#) prices met with resistance on higher levels and lost Rs 38 per quintal in the futures trading today amid weak spot markets sentiment.

Marketmen said higher arrivals and profit booking at existing higher levels mainly put pressure on prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, mustardseed for far July contract plummeted by Rs 38, or 1.09 per cent, to Rs 3,450 per quintal, witnessing an open interest of 3,910 lots.

The April contract lost Rs 14, or 0.42 per cent, to Rs 3,314 per quintal, depicting an open interest of 58,580 lots.

Castorseed falls on weak spot demand

[Castorseed](#) prices dropped by Rs 76 to Rs 4,442 per quintal in futures trading today on the back of weak physical markets demand.

Marketmen said increased supply and slackness in demand from consuming industries such as paint and lubricant mainly pulled down castorseed prices.

Fall in export demand also dampened the trading sentiments to some extent, they added.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, castorseed for June delivery dipped by Rs 76, or 1.68 per cent, to Rs 4,442 per quintal with open interest of 330 lots.

The March contract slid by Rs 53, or 1.24 per cent, to Rs 4,214 per quintal in 1,87,990 lots.

Current February contract also lost Rs 57, or 1.35 per cent, to Rs 4,165 per quintal, clocking an open interest of 15,440 lots.

Potato futures fall 1.1% on reduced offtake

[Potato](#) futures [prices](#) fell 1.11% to Rs 1,150 per quintal today as speculators offloaded positions on weak trend in the spot market.

At the [Multi Commodity Exchange](#), potato for April delivery fell by Rs 13, or 1.11%, to Rs 1,150 per quintal, with a business volume of 58 lots.

For delivery in March, potato traded lower by Rs 5.20, or 0.46%, to Rs 1,124 per quintal, with a trade volume of 62 lots.

Marketmen said fall in potato prices was mostly due to offloading of positions by speculators, driven by subdued demand in the spot market amid increased supplies in the physical market.

Cardamom rises 0.53% on spot demand

[Cardamom prices](#) rose 0.53% to Rs 808.90 per kg in futures trade today as speculators created fresh positions on firm [spot market](#) demand.

Further, restricted arrivals from producing regions also supported the uptrend.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, April delivery rose Rs 4.30, or 0.53%, to Rs 808.90 per kg, with a business turnover of 61 lots.

The March spice jumped Rs 4.10, or 0.52%, to Rs 402 per kg, with trading volume of 402 lots.

Traders said rising demand in the spot market against less arrivals from producing regions mainly led to an upsurge in cardamom futures prices.
