THE HINDU

With level in Periyar dam rising, farmers want water released

Water level has been steadily increasing in Periyar dam. The level stood at 130.3 feet in the dam on Thursday. The inflow into the dam was 2,485 cusecs and the discharge 500 cusecs. The storage was 4,965 mcft.With comfortable storage in the dam, farmers in other parts of the district appealed to the government to release water in 18th Channel and PTR Channel for irrigation in single crop areas in Thevaram and Bodi blocks.The water to be released through 18th Channel will be stored in 44 irrigation tanks to irrigate rain-fed crops up to Meenakshipuram in Bodi block and to recharge groundwater table.The 40.8-km-long 18th Channel will irrigate 2,090 acres in Uthamapalayam and 2,045 acres in Bodinaickanur blocks.On the whole, farmers in 75 villages between Gudalur and Thevaram will benefit through the release.The release will benefit farmers in Dombucheri, T. Chindhalaicherry, Pannaipuram, Kombai, Sankarapuram, Vembakottai, Thevaram, Lakshminaickanpatti, Pothaipuram, Meenakshipuram, Gudalur and Uthamapuram village in Uthamapalayam taluk.The PWD officials said they were waiting for the government nod to release water in these channels.Vaigai dam has 52 feet of water. The inflow into the dam was 355 cusecs and the discharge 60 cusecs. The State government ordered the release of water from Vaigai dam on Friday to irrigate cultivable lands in Dindigul, Theni and Madurai districts.

Farmers yet to receive crop insurance under scheme

The payment of relief to farmers under the National Crop Insurance Programme (NCIP) proposed this year, is yet to happen due to the many pitfalls in the changes introduced to the insurance scheme.Official sources told *The Hindu* in Gulbarga on Monday that the Union and State governments had issued notifications bringing in radical changes in the payment of compensation to farmers.Although the farmers had suffered extensive loss after investing all their savings in the kharif crop this year, none of the State governments had made any claim on behalf of the farmers with the insurance companies Agriculture Insurance Company of India, ICICI Lombard General Insurance Company, HDFC Ergo General Insurance Company and the IFFCO Tokio General Insurance Company seeking the payment of compensation as per the changed norms of the NCIP.Sources said that the changed norms provides for the payment of 12.50 per cent of the total insurance amount of the policy, if the farmers failed to take up the sowing operations in 75 per cent of the total area due to the failure of rains.

Direct payment

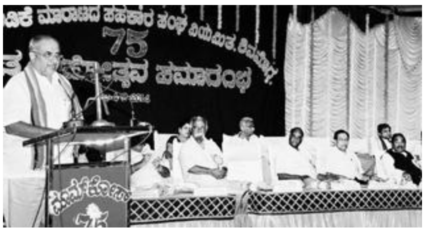
The insurance companies have been asked to make the payment directly to the bank accounts of farmers within one month after getting the report from the respective Deputy Commissioner and the Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre.If the farmers chose to claim these benefits at the initial stages of cultivation, their policy would be closed and they would not be eligible to claim any other benefits from the insurance policy at the later stage.A senior official of an insurance company involved in the agriculture insurance told *the Hindu* that the State governments were not keen on availing this benefit for the simple reason that the farmers would not be able to claim higher benefits at the end of the policy if they get small benefitsat the beginning or middle of the season.

Guidelines

Sources said as per the guidelines of the insurance policy, the farmers who were covered under the crop insurance have the right to claim 50 per cent of the insurance amount if the sown crop failed within two months and 75 per cent of the insurance amount if the crop failed within three months. They were eligible to claim 100 per cent of the insurance amount, if the crop failed totally after three months.

<u>Coop. Minister for introduction of online trading of arecanut</u>

'Aim is to ensure price stability and better returns to growers'



Minister for Cooperation H.S. Mahadeva Prasad speaking after inaugurating the diamond jubilee function of the Malnad Arecanut Marketing Cooperative Society in Shimoga on Thursday.— Photo VAIDYA

Minister for Cooperation H.S. Mahadeva Prasad on Monday underscored the need to introduce online trading of arecanut to stabilise its price.He was speaking after inaugurating a programme organised by the Malnad Arecanut Marketing Cooperative Society (MAMCOS) to mark its platinum jubilee here.Online trading of coconut through Rashtriya e-Market Services (ReMS) was introduced in February 2014. Ever since the online trading was introduced, the price of coconut, which was at Rs. 6,000 a quintal, increased to Rs. 14,000 to Rs. 15,000 a quintal. The price of arecanut had witnessed erratic fluctuations in recent times. It was possible to ensure remunerative price for arecanut through online trading.The government would take a decision in this regard after taking the stakeholders, including growers, merchants and representatives of cooperative marketing societies, into confidence, he said.Mr. Prasad said that arecanut growers had suffered heavy loss in recent times owing to fruit rot disease, popularly known as koleroga, and owing to price fluctuation. It was essential to establish a separate board for arecanut on the model of Coffee Board and Spices Board. The proposed board would be involved in study and research activities on pest management and value addition products of arecanut, he said.National vice-president of the Bharatiya Janata Party and the former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa, in his address, said that study and research on producing commercial products like cardboard and mats from the arecanut husk should be promoted to enhance the income of farmers.At present, a major chunk of arecanut trading was taking place outside the purview of Agriculture Produce Marketing Committees (APMCs). The unauthorised traders were purchasing arecanut at the doorsteps of farmers.The unauthorised trading of arecanut had resulted in loss of revenue to the State exchequer by way of commercial tax.Therefore, unauthorised trading of arecanut should be stopped, he said.K. Narasimha Naik, vice-president of MAMCOS, said that the society was paying Rs. 1 lakh as compensation to the workers who died in the plantations of its members by falling from arecanut palms while engaging themselves in the routine chores like plucking of arecanut or spraying pesticide. It had been decided to increase the compensation to Rs. 2 lakh, he said.Chairman of the State Legislative Council D.H. Shankaramurthy, Minister of State for Primary and Secondary Education Kimmane Ratnakar, Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council K.S. Eshwarappa, member of Rajya Sabha Ayanur Manjunath and Deputy Commissioner Vipul Bansal were present.

Crop, property worth Rs. 27 crore damaged in Yadgir

Minister of Textile and Ports Baburao Chinchanasur said the total loss due to heavy rain and flash floods in Yadgir district is more than Rs. 27 crore.Mr Chinchanasur, who is also the district in-charge Minister, told presspersons in Yadgir on Thursday that standing crops in 6,171 hectares were damaged. More than 855 houses were either partially or fully damaged in the rain and flash floods. Compensation has been distributed to those who lost their houses.The district administration still had Rs. 7 crore under the Calamities Relief Fund (CRF) to take up relief works and pay compensation, he said.He said Deputy Commissioner Manoj Jain has been asked to submit a detailed report of crop loss to the State government, seeking release of additional funds for payment of compensation to the farmers. Mr Chinchanasur said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is likely to visit Yadgir district after visiting flood-hit areas in Gulbarga district on Saturday.

Farmers haul in big catch of sea bass, pearl spot

Farmers in Kakkamadanthuruthu and Thiruthur under Puthenvelikkara Panchayat are hauling in rich catches of sea bass and pearl spot ahead of Onam through a cage farming programme introduced in these villages by Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences through the integrated fish farming project *Samagra Matsyagramam* .Shibu and Barnabas Valiyaparambil in Kakkamadanthuruthu have been into cage farming of sea bass, cobia and pearl spot since 2008. They first launched their venture under an initiative of Kottappuram Integrated Development Society and have now taken up cage farming on a bigger scale.The harvest on Thursday was of sea bass and the fish weighed more than a kg on an average. Sea bass is a commercially important species and is in great demand during the festive seasons.Harvests are done usually ahead of festivals like Onam, Christmas and Easter, said Mr. Shibu on Thursday. The farming activities are undertaken under the supervision of scientists from Kufos, who were present at the harvest.Vice-Chancellor of Kufos B. Madhusoodana Kurup, in a press release issued by the University, said that the success of the cage farming of commercially important species was encouragement for spreading the practices elsewhere in the State. “The University has introduced eco-friendly farming methods to achieve sustainability,” said Dr. Kurup.The Kufos programme is financially backed by Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and the State Government’s Department of Fisheries.

Fishers see threat in move to create buffer zones

The Central government’s move to create offshore buffer zones and ban fishing of certain species of sharks and manta rays is aimed at promoting the operation of foreign trawlers in Indian waters and represents a clear and present danger to the lives and livelihood of coastal communities in the country, organisations representing fishermen fear.

Stir planned

The Kerala Swathantra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF), National Fishworkers Forum, and Association of Deep Sea Going Artisanal Fishermen (ADSGAF) have joined hands to announce a nationwide agitation against the twin threats to the community.Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, leaders of the three organisations said the proposal of the B. Meenakumari committee to create offshore buffer zones to protect fish resources ran counter to the recommendation of the same committee to allow permits for foreign trawlers.The Central government had appointed a seven-member expert committee headed by Dr. B. Meenakumari to review the deep sea fishing policy. The panel submitted its recommendations in August. “The Blue Revolution mooted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi cannot not achieved by jeopardising the livelihood of tens of thousands of fishermen and their families," NFF secretary T. Peter said."While any move to ban fishing in the offshore area of depth 200 to 500 m will infringe on the rights of traditional fishermen, promoting the operation of foreign trawlers will lead to a crisis in the domestic fisheries sector," he said.

Against curbs

The leaders also came out against the proposal by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) to regulate the fishing and trade of certain species of sharks and manta rays in Indian waters from September 14.J. Vincent Jain, Chief Executive, ADSGAF, said the proposal was unscientific and absurd, given the practical difficulty in singling out certain species for fishing.He feared that fishermen netting the banned species would face prosecution by enforcement officials while foreign trawlers would get away.The three organisations will hold a convention in New Delhi next month to protest the anti- fisher policies.

Flood victims yet to receive relief: MP

Attingal MP A. Sampath has accused the government of turning a blind eye to the ordeal faced by the victims of recent floods in the district.Talking to the mediapersons here on Thursday, he said many of the families back home from relief camps were yet to receive adequate compensation for the damage to property and standing crops. "Many of them have lost household equipment, valuable documents, and even clothes."Floodwaters have damaged several houses, making them unfit for occupation. Crop loss in the district is estimated at Rs.20 crore," Mr. Sampath said.Pointing out that the highest amount of monsoon-related damage was reported from Chirayinkeezh, Nedumangad, and Varkala taluks, Mr. Sampath appealed to the government to provide assistance for the stricken families for the Onam festival.He urged Chief Minister Oommen Chandy to convene a meeting of officials and elected representatives to assess the extent of damage and discuss the relief and rehabilitation measures to be initiated.

Virtual academy for agriculture launched

International Crops Research Institute for Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) Director General William Dar said that there was an urgent need to address hunger and malnutrition across the globe and for that, a new approach needs to be followed.Dr. Dar was addressing a gathering of scientists and Vice-Chancellors of agriculture universities at ICRISAT on Thursday after formally launching the 'National virtual academy for Indian agriculture'. This is part of an effort to promote agriculture. The programme, launched under the 'One agriculture - One Science Initiative', is aimed at promoting Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for agricultural professionals.

This was mooted by the Global Agricultural Consortium.Stating that about 42 per cent of children in India were malnourished, Dr. Dar said that addressing this problem was a big challenge for the scientific community and ‘entrepreneurial science’ needed to be brought in to face such challenges. Maintaining that blending Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and agriculture can create miracles, Arvind Kumar, Deputy Director General (Education), Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR), said that launching of the virtual academy was a good beginning.He said that they were focusing on the establishment of a national agricultural education programme.Dileep Kumar Guntuku, Global Leader for Knowledge Sharing and Innovation (KSI), said that this was a pilot project aimed at providing course material useful in farming.University of Florida, Michigan State University, I State and ICRISAT are partners for this programme.

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Collector reviews loan waiver

Srikakulam Collector Saurabh Gaur on Thursday asked the bankers to prepare a list of farmers eligible for loan waiver scheme. He visited agricultural development branch of the State Bank of India and inquired about the implementation of loan waiver scheme. The bank officials said the farmers who took loans before December 31, 2013 were eligible for waiver. Lead Bank Manager M.Venkatarami Reddy said farmers of 38 mandals in the district were eligible for loan rescheduling as per the directive of the RBI.

Farmers to lay siege to sugar mill on Sept. 9

The Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers' Association has decided to lay siege to Bannari Amman Sugar Mill, Kolunthampattu near here on September 9.They urged the mill to disburse the State Advised Price (SAP), which it withholds, to the farmers who supplied cane this year.

Resolutions

A resolution to this effect was passed at the unit-level general body meeting of the association held at Thandarampattu on Wednesday.S.Balaraman, district president of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, presided over the meeting.Another resolution wanted the mill to clear the ambiguity shrouding the two weighing machine system it follows at its unit.One machine is used for weighing the incoming cane brought in by the farmers while the other machine is used for weighing the outgoing produce (sugar).Association's State vice-president Janarthanan and Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam district joint secretary L.Alagesan also took part.

Water level at Mettur

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 103.20 feet on Thursday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 18,370 cusecs and the discharge 18,002 cusecs.

hindustantimes.com

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Friday, Sep 5

Sunny

Max	Min
32°	| 26°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:19

Barometer: 1005

Tomorrow's Forecast

Saturday, Sep 6

Cloudy

Max	Min
33°	| 25°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday **Sep 7**	Monday **Sep 8**	Tuesday **Sep 9**	Wednesday **Sep 10**	Thursday **Sep 11**
32° | 25°	33° | 26°	35° | 27°	34° | 28°	35° | 27°
Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

Airport Weather

Chennai Chennai

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 05:57

Sunset: 06:19

Barometer: 1005

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Telangana Govt Must Promote Cultivation of Millets: Expert

City-based premier Central research institute, the Directorate of Sorghum Research (DSR), is soon to be elevated to a one of its kind Indian Institute of Millet Research (IIMR).A decision to this effect was taken recently by the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR). With this, the Centre, which has been working towards crop improvement and technology advancement for sorghum, as well its supply, will aim and focus on creating a collective bargaining capacity for all millet crops, which scientists believe is essential for nutritional security of the country.Telangana state which comprises largely drought-prone dry land areas is expected to be the biggest beneficiary of the research activities, but not without adequate policy support from the government for production, procurement, processing, promotion and consumption, says JV Patil, director, DSR."Our focus so far had been on sorghum research, but we realise that even basic research has been lacking in all millet crops. A proposal was sent to ICAR about two years ago, and now, IMAR will be set up in Hyderabad as an extension of DSR," said Patil.According to him, with additional infrastructural, including laboratories, fields, manpower and funds, nutritional and biochemical research studies could be conducted on all millets to develop IMAR as a hub of millet research in the country. "Just like our research work on plant breeding, entomology, pathology, physiology, biochemistry, agronomy and biotechnology of sorghum, we will work on eliminating anti-nutritional factors in millets," he added.In a freewheeling interaction with Express, Patil explains the importance and relevance of millet research, production and consumption, especially in the young state of Telangana. Excerpts:Importance of millets research: Cultivable land is shrinking and population is rising. Telangana state, largely comprising dry lands, cannot ensure food or nutritional security if it continues to cultivate paddy and maize, as productivity is directly proportional to irrigation facilities or rainfall. There is no data available on land area under sorghum or millets cultivation. Generating the database is not our mandate. Our focus is on climate change and nutrition in people's diet.Why sorghum and millets: Millets are C4 crops which efficiently utilise carbon dioxide to increase productivity. They are drought tolerant and can survive high temperatures. They are gluten-free, high in calcium, iron, zinc and anti-oxidants and have high presence of dietary fibres, and above all, release carbohydrates in slower quantities. All of this makes them superior to rice.DSR's contribution:Preparation of delicacies out of sorghum is a cumbersome process. We have not only developed improvised techniques for sorghum value additions using which any of the rice products could be made using sorghum. Based on our research, Britannia sorghum nutri-cereal biscuits will soon hit the market. Our own brand "Eatrite" products like biscuits, flakes, vermicelli, pasta, noodles etc is available through different brand outlets. We even promote enterprises by giving our processing technology.Creating a market: Earlier, policy support was nil and revenue from cultivation was minimal. If the government enhances procurement of millets and sets up processing facilities, apart from providing subsidies for cultivation, farmers will be motivated. The crop is also best suited for cattle fodder and could well be a form of state revenue if pursued. If the Britannia nutri-cereal biscuit is a hit among consumers, naturally there will be a demand for sorghum and we could sell them the grains.

<u>Horticorp's Onam Bonanza</u>

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At a time when prices of vegetables are skyrocketing in the market in the wake of Onam festival, the Kerala State Horticulture Products Development Corporation (Horticorp) has come to the rescue of the public by giving 30 per cent subsidy on vegetable produce.The subsidy will be available at all the Horticorp outlets in the district till the concluding day of Onam. "We have been giving subsidy on vegetables a week prior to the Onam celebrations. The produce available through the outlets is mostly organic as it is collected directly from small time farmers," said Anas, district manager, Horticorp.There are 26 outlets with a variety of vegetables in Kochi city and suburbs. Koothattukulam, Kakkanad, Eechamukku, Kaloor stadium, Piravam, Mulanthuruthy, Tripunithura, Irumpanam, Edappally Toll, Thykoodam, Edakkattuvayal, Pattimattom, Kolenchery, Perumbavoor, Arakkunnam, North Paravur and Nayarambalam are the outlets functioning specially to meet the vegetable demands.“At present, around 16 tonnes of vegetable are being brought from different collecting centres in the district and it will definitely go up to 20 tonnes when Onam sets in . Thodupuzha, Maradu, Munnar, Muvattupuzha are the major collecting centres. If any scarcity arises we will procure vegetables from Tamil Nadu to meet the demand,” Anas said.

Veggies Turn Dearer as Onam Sets in

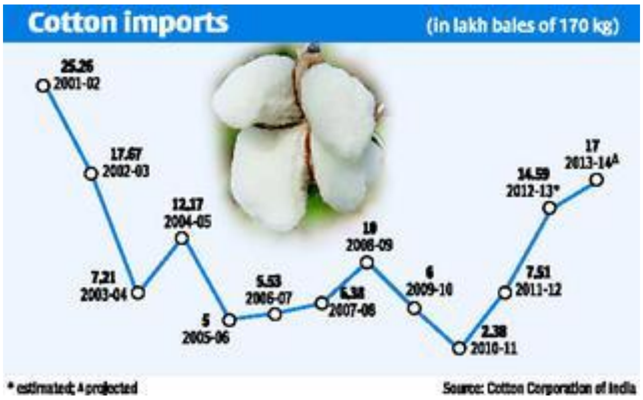
With just two days left for Onam, the prices of vegetables in Ernakulam market are going up. The prices of vegetables have increased at least by 30 per cent compared to the last year, say merchants in Ernakulam Market.“The price of string beans, bitter gourd and mango are going up while prices of carrot are coming down. While the price of tomato is stable, string beans have become costlier and stands at Rs 75-Rs 80 (earlier 35-40) and bitter gourd at Rs 35. There was steep increase in the price of mango which touched 80 from previous price of Rs 25- Rs 30 a kg,” said K K Ashraf, general secretary, Ernakulam Market Vegetable Merchants Association.“Though the price of tomato remains stale it is also likely to go up from Friday onwards as Thiruvonam say nears. The price of banana is already at Rs 60 per kg and ladies finger is at Rs 40 for wholesale. The price of retail may vary,” he said.With hartal on the other day hitting transportation of perishable cargo, the prices had come down temporarily for two days. “These days, people of all communities stock vegetables at home for Onam. Onam is celebrated wherever Malayalis live. This has increased the demands, at the same time production is not rising up in Tamil Nadu,” Ashraf said.Meanwhile, it has been pointed out that there was no shortage in supply of vegetables and the increase was the result of manipulation by vegetable traders and middlemen.Government agencies such as Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Horticorp) and Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCK) are also active in the market.Major hotels and restaurants have taking orders for Onasadya. People can book their tables in advance, otherwise the sadya would be delivered at their homes.

Tea export volume up, but dollar earnings dip

The ongoing political crisis in Pakistan is causing uncertainties in tea exports from Nilgiris to the neighbouring country – the largest buyer of Nilgiris teas after Russia.Overall, Pakistan had lent a helping hand so far this year. In the first half of the current calendar, it imported 8.08 million kg (mkg) of Indian tea worth Rs. 81.87 crore against 7.24 mkg worth Rs. 76.13 crore in the corresponding period of 2013.reduced prices to $3.12 a kg in 2014 from $3.42 from 2013 but earnings plunged to $295.36 million from $302.70 million, according to Tea Board. Still, lower prices helped the overall shipment to rise to 94.53 mkg from 88.58 mkg in the first half of last year.Because of the depreciation of the rupee, tea exporters received higher earnings in Indian rupees despite lower price in dollar terms. Thus, exporters earned Rs. 1795.36 crore in the first six months of 2014 compared to Rs. 1665.07 crore.However, export to CIS has fallen to 25.84 mkg worth Rs. 427.96 crore from 26.59 mkg worth Rs. 446.07 crore. “Global production till July has fallen to 950.93 mkg from 959.35 mkg because of shortfall in North India,” Rajesh Gupta, compiler of annual Global Tea Digest, told *BusinessLine* .

As global prices fall, cotton imports rise

Shipments surge to 12-year high as spinning mills in South buy



India’s cotton imports this season, which ends this month, will be at 12-year high as global prices have dropped below domestic rates.“With prices on ICE US dropping below 90 cents a pound since May, spinning mills in the South signed contracts to buy cotton from sellers abroad. Most of the imports have been made after May,” said J Thulasidharan, President, Indian Cotton Federation.Currently, cotton contracts for delivery in December are ruling at 65.75 cents a pound (approximately Rs. 31,500 for a candy of 356 kg). In the domestic market, Shankar-6, mainly in demand for exports, is ruling at Rs. 39,000-40,000 a candy.Some 12 lakh bales have been imported since

May and if the usual imports of five lakh bales are taken into account, then shipments into the country will exceed 17 lakh bales. (Extra-long staple cotton is imported normally since the availability of such varieties is not ample.) The last time when imports exceed 17 lakh bales was during 2002-03."Mills in South imported mainly. It makes sense to import since cotton is cheaper to import than buying from Gujarat due to higher transport costs," said Thulasidharan.Most of the imports were contracted around 85 cents."Import contracts have been signed between 85 and 92 cents c&f by spinning mills in South India. For shipments till December, contracts have been signed at 75-78 cents. Imports will continue next season starting October since mills have committed themselves to getting the shipments," said Anand Poppat of Saurashtra Ginners Association.The imports will be mainly from Australia and Africa.Conceding that there was supply hurdles, especially due to quality issues, Poppat said currently 10,000 bales (170 kg each) of cotton are arriving every day in Gujarat markets."Farmers in Gujarat had held back their produce. Stocks with them now could easily be five lakh bales," said Poppat.

Delayed new crop

Importing cotton up to the year-end is crucial for mills since the arrival of new crop will be delayed this year."Currently, the crop is in the third stage of development, getting its last round of rain. Arrivals are likely to be delayed by 30-40 days and may not peak until the second fortnight of November," said Poppat."Imports could slow down once arrivals peak," said Thulasidharan."Prices could drop to levels of Rs. 36,000 when the new crop begins to arrive," said Poppat.

Prices under pressure

Cotton prices are seen under pressure since domestic production next season is seen at a new high of over 375 lakh bales by the Cotton Advisory Board. Data from the Agriculture Ministry showed that the area under cotton has increased to a record 122.50 lakh hectares this year against 115.5 lakh hectares last year."Production can easily top 400 lakh bales with production in Gujarat likely to be over 135 lakh bales," said Poppat.Once domestic prices drop to levels of Rs. 36,000, then Indian cotton could turn competitive in the global market."Prospects for exports are good, though they may not match this season's level," said Poppat.About 90 lakh bales are projected to have been exported this season against 101.43 lakh bales last season."China has ended auctioning its stocks. Auctions will not take place till March since it will buy the fibre from farmers. So, it will import cotton," said Poppat.With Australia's crop seen falling 50 per cent this year to 117 lakh bales (170 kg) and the area under the fibre in China down nine per cent, India and the US, which is likely to harvest a record crop, will remain the main sources for cotton this year.Cotton prices, as a result, will continue to be under pressure.

Cotton acreage zooms to new peak in Gujarat

Cotton sowing in Gujarat, the country's biggest producer of the fibre, has touched a new high with acreage crossing 30 lakh hectares this year against a three-year average of 27.17 lakh hectares.Due to delay in monsoon by over a month, farmers have chosen to cultivate cotton over other crops such as groundnut and pulses."Cotton prices have already come under pressure due to higher stocks. Spot rates are quoting in the range of Rs. 39,000/candy (of 356 kg), but one month forward rates have slipped to about Rs. 34,000," said NK Sharma, Managing Director, Gujarat State Cooperative Cotton Federation Ltd (Gujcot).International cotton prices, too, have come under pressure at around 76 cents a pound.In its latest report, the International Cotton Advisory Committee said that in 2014-15, cotton might witness a surplus for the fifth consecutive season. "World production is forecast to decline by 400,000 tonnes to 26.05 million tonnes, while consumption could grow by 4 per cent to 24.4 million tonnes, resulting in a surplus of 1.7 million tonnes."Trade body Cotton Association of India has convened a meeting to decide the sowing and production estimates.Farmer sources and insiders maintained that cotton sowing has seen sharp surge in States such as Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Karnataka.

New spinning units

But with new spinning units coming on stream and exports set to surge to around 100 lakh bales, demand-supply balance in cotton will be maintained in the country, which would not let prices to drop significantly.Currently, minimum support price on cotton (raw) is fixed at Rs. 4,000/quintal. Farmers believe in an excess production scenario, the Cotton Corporation of India would have to be prepared to intervene if prices fall below Rs. 4,000.

Kerala varsity to extend fish cage culture project to more areas

The fish cage culture taken up by Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies as a part of 'Samagra Matsyagramam Project' (Integrated Fish Farming) will be extended to more areas in the State.The project proved that the freshwater and brackish water bodies in the State are highly suitable for fish culture. The success story of the project encourages KUFOS to develop fish farming projects and to extend it to other areas by exploiting the potential of the sector, B Madhusoodana Kurup, Vice Chancellor, KUFOS said.He also inaugurated launched the harvest in Puthenvelikkara Panchayat near here, where a yield of around two tonnes of Seabass (Kalanchi) was recorded, and over 170 kg of Pearl Spot (Karimeen), all cultured in cages at Kakkamadanthuruth and Thiruthur areas. The harvests were a bumper one.The project, initiated with the support of Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and Kerala State Fisheries Department, has been turned to a huge success with a big catch of Seabass and Pearl Spot from eight cages installed in the backwaters of the areas.The yield of Seabass, with an average weight of 1.6 kg is a rare achievement in cage culture within nine months.The University, he said, introduced eco-friendly farming methods to achieve sustainability of fisheries. The project also enriched the indigenous fish stocks that are facing the threat of extinction.Aimed at empowering fish farmers in panchayats, the project has been receiving encouraging response from the farming community. KUFOS initiated the project focusing on freshwater fish culture, brackish water fish culture, ornamental fish culture, cage culture and integrated farming utilising the resources of public and private ponds and backwaters.Daisy C Kappen, Associate Professor of KUFOS, is the Principal Investigator of the project.

Prices edge up for some varieties of tea at Kochi sale

Prices for some varieties of tea at the Kochi auction witnessed a slight upward trend despite low arrivals. However, the entire 14,000 kg on offer in the Orthodox leaf grades was unsold due to lack or low bid.Of the quantity of 8,13,000 kg on offer in CTC dust grades in sale no 36, good liquoring teas was firm to dearer by Rs. 2-3 a kg and sometimes more. Grainier varieties of medium and plainer teas were steady to firm and sometimes appreciated. Powdery varieties were irregular and lower.Upcountry buyers operated with lower limits while exporters confined to medium and plainer varieties, the auctioneers Forbes, Ewart & Figgis said.In the best CTC dust quotation, good varieties fetched Rs. 97-156, medium grades quoted Rs. 73-95 and plain at Rs. 50-63.With a fair demand in leaf category, the quantity on offer in orthodox grades was 106,500 kg.The market for good liquoring Nilgiri Brokens, whole leaf appreciated in value by Rs. 5-10 and sometimes more. There was a subdued demand for exports to CIS countries.The quantity on offer in CTC grades was 57,000 kg. Fannings were steady to firm and sometimes dearer. Smaller Brokens tended to ease and also witnessed some withdrawals.In the dust varieties, Injipara (Prm) SRD quoted the best prices of Rs. 160 followed by Monica SFD at Rs.156.In the leaf category, Pascoe's Woodlands Hyson Green Tea fetched the best prices of Rs. 290 followed by Warwick FOP-S (Green Tea) at Rs. 258.

Monsoon winds head right into Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Himachal

Heavily moisture-laden monsoon winds are now fanning right into Jammu and Kashmir in the extreme north of the country and adjoining north-west India.Other areas being covered include Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, an India Met Department outlook said, confirming forecasts made by various international weather models.

Twin 'low's

The low-pressure twins are now active over west Rajasthan to the north and Kutch in Gujarat to the southwest and their performance is being stepped up by passing western disturbances.The Met had forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall over Jammu and Kashmir, west Rajasthan, east Rajasthan, Punjab, Saurashtra and Kutch for Thursday.Its outlook was for heavy rainfall over east Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Odisha, coastal Karnataka and Kerala.As for Friday, it has forecast heavy to very heavy rainfall for Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Odisha.Heavy rain is expected over Rajasthan, east Gujarat, Saurashtra, Kutch, Odisha and coastal Karnataka. By Saturday, the heavy rainfall focus would once again shift back to the east coast with heavy rainfall being forecast for Odisha and coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Building 'low'

And expectedly so since this would be the time around when a building low-pressure area would go through the motion even while still being at a base out into the sea (Bay of Bengal).The new 'low' will wait until the current feverish activity over extreme north and northwest India lifts and make a delayed entry into Andhra Pradesh coast, south of where it is actually taking shape.This would take the next couple of days to happen, and the 'low' will once again bring heavy rain into central and adjoining north peninsular India (mainly Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha).

Westerly front

But latest forecasts suggest that it will run into a barrage of rampaging westerlies over central India, breaking free as they do subsequent to clearing of air over Rajasthan and Gujarat.The westerlies might cause the 'low' to shift gear and head a little to the north where it is seen parking over northwest Madhya Pradesh and adjoining east Rajasthan.Monsoon watchers are also looking for signs for abatement of sea-based weather activity in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal by mid-week next week when the causative upper level wave would exit the Bay.The Madden-Julian Oscillation wave is predicted to enter South China Sea/west Pacific to set up clouds and kick off a rainy spell over the Maritime Continent (Indonesia, et al).

<u>Sugar exports seen at 26.54 lt</u>

Sugar exports for the current season ending this month is estimated at 26.54 lakh tonnes (lt), up from a meagre 3.48 lt last season.The Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA) pegged raw sugar exports at 11.5 lt and shipments of white sugar at 10.5 lt. Another 4.5 lt were shipped under the Advance Authorisation Scheme, wherein the white sugar is exported against imports of raw sugar made earlier at zero per cent Customs duty. Iran, Sudan and Somalia were the top three export destinations for Indian sugar.“The volume can be attributed to two things. First, there was a surplus stock at the end of the last season and second, there was a spurt in international prices between October and December last year, when prices rose to about 19 cents a pound. Many contracts were signed during this period,” said Abinash Verma, Director-General, ISMA.In February, the Government had announced an export subsidy of Rs. 3,300 a tonne on raw sugar for 40 lt to be shipped between February 2014 and September 2015. The scheme was to enable the cash-starved industry to pay sugarcane arrears to farmers amounting to over Rs. 8,000 crore as of August 31.The scheme, likely to have a new formula fixed by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, did not benefit producers much as expected due to the timing of the announcement and only about 6.5 lt were exported under the incentive scheme this season.

Late announcement

“The export subsidy didn’t help much as the policy was announced when mills had almost closed operations by February 28. Also, the subsidy was for production of raw sugar when mills generally produce white sugar unless there’s a specific contract. They announced it so late that the time for people to enter into a contract and produce raw sugar was hardly there. If it continues then people will produce a good quantity of raw sugar,” Verma said.With with a Rs. 3,300 subsidy, global prices need to rule around at least 17 cents for raw sugar exports to become feasible, he said.According to ISMA, total sugar production in the 2013-14 season is estimated at 243 lt.The carryover stock for next season is likely to be around 75 lt of which 50 lt will go towards domestic consumption during October-November before crushing operations begin after the Diwali break.

bl05 com Turmeric

AMPLE SUPPLIES GRIND TURMERIC

Turmeric prices continue to rule low as traders in North India seem to be holding huge stocks. “We are waiting for orders from merchants in North India. Such delay may be due to the huge stock traders are holding in North India. But some merchants will place fresh orders for hybrid turmeric at Erode,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association. At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric fetched Rs. 4,299-6,311 a quintal, the root variety Rs.4,032-6,011. Salem Hybrid: The finger turmeric was sold at Rs. 5,719-6,731; the root variety at Rs. 5,539-6,219. Of the 752 bags that arrivcd, 218 were sold.Our Correspondent

Injecting liquidity in agri markets

Participants who surf on the commodity markets achieve different outcomes every year, depending on their timing and size of the wave on which they ride.I define the size of a market wave as the liquidity in that market. Usually, greater the liquidity, greater the incentives to participate in a market. Within the commodities asset class, agricultural markets have unique liquidity characteristics, which I will address below.First, in agricultural markets, liquidity is a function of seasonality. In general, planting and harvest bring the greatest market participation of producers. Growing cycles bring traders into the market. Pre-planting and post-harvest are generally the times when passive investors participate.These observations are supported by publicly available data. Any sudden change in weather that affects seasonality can also significantly impact market liquidity.Second, the amount of market volatility in agricultural markets influences active funds to either participate or stay away.Generally, greater the volatility, greater the incentive for funds to participate, as they can get higher returns. Volatility is different across agricultural commodities, leading to an ebb and flow of capital among these products, which then can lead to a change in the liquidity profile of each.Third, fundamentals play an important role in attracting liquidity into the agricultural markets.In general, high supply makes it unattractive to pour liquidity in, and lower supply makes it more attractive, if demand is held constant.This type of liquidity cycle is also long-term, as it lasts longer than a season or a year. One such example can be seen in this year's grain markets.While the reasons illustrated above cause the shifts in liquidity profiles, a few indicators such as bid/ask spreads, sudden changes in curve structures, and divergence between cash and futures markets are good predictive tools for an impending liquidity event in the future.Once we have identified the causes for liquidity events and indicators that predict such events, we are compelled to answer two questions: Do we intervene to prevent a possible liquidity crisis? And if so, how?The first answer should be yes, as liquidity in markets is something that benefits all market participants – it can be defined as a common good.Liquidity intervention reduces sudden shocks in the market and substantially lowers risk for participants. In my view, there needs to be a clear definition of a minimum threshold liquidity level that government or regulatory bodies should maintain. (My proposal can be viewed in one way as a subsidy, but in other ways, it can be justified as maintenance cost instead of a cost triggered by a one-off event in case of crisis).This solution is analogous to how the central banks maintain a money supply in the economy.

Advantages

There are several advantages of this proposed solution: First, it is a preventive and predictive solution for liquidity management.

Second, it reduces the costs of aftershocks for the government, should there be a market failure.

Third, the price of liquidity risk falls, benefiting market participants.

Fourth, entry barriers for new participants are lowered.

Fifth, and possibly most important, is that the aforementioned effects of seasonality, volatility, and fundamentals on liquidity changes can also be mitigated.

The writer is based in London and is the founder and Managing Director of OpalCrest.

Business Standard

Chana down 0.8% on profit-booking

Chana prices fell 0.85% to Rs 2,803 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators booked profits at prevailing levels amid sluggish demand in the physical market.At the National Commodity and Derivative Exchange, chana for September declined by Rs 24, or 0.85%, to Rs 2,803 per quintal with an open interest for 80,350 lots.Similarly, chana for October delivery fell by Rs 22, or 0.76% to Rs 2,860 per quintal with open interest of 1,11,740 lots.Traders said besides profit-booking by speculators, weak demand from millers and higher supplies in the spot market, mainly led to the fall in chana prices at futures trade.

Cardamom up 0.7% on rising demand

Rising for the third straight day, cardamom advanced by 0.69% to Rs 927.90 per kg in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions, tracking a firming trend at spot market.At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in October gained Rs 6.40, or 0.69%, to Rs 927.90 per kg in business turnover of 72 lots.Similarly, the spice for delivery in September traded higher by Rs 5.50, or 0.58%, to Rs 948.10 per kg in 75 lots.Market analysts said sustained rise in cardamom prices at futures trade is due to strong demand in the spot markets against restricted arrivals from producing belts.

Insurers bet big on agri commodities

Non-life insurers are betting highly on the Forward Markets Commission (FMC)'s proposed norms relating to commodities trade. According to the norms, warehouseservice providers (WSPs) will have to provide full insurance covers to deliverable commodities on futures exchanges.In draft guidelines issued on August 26, the FMC said WSPs seeking accreditation with the National Multi Commodity Exchange would have to fully cover the value of goods at exchange-approved warehouses for risks such as fires, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, burglaries, thefts, etc.The WSPs will also need fidelity guarantees and indemnity covers for all stocks deliverable on the exchange. The value of the goods to be insured would be marked-to-market on the replacement value, on an ongoing basis, the FMC said. It sought comments on these guidelines from the public by September 15."With the FMC asking WSPs to take insurance cover for their goods, there will be business opportunities for companies such as ours. Since there is always a risk of losing these commodities to fire, flood and other perils, the mandated insurance will lead to additional opportunities for insurers," said Rakesh Jain, chief executive of Reliance General Insurance.The insurance coverage for commodities accounts for less than five per cent of the overall business of the non-life insurance sector. Experts said if all WSPs took insurance covers for crops, this might rise to eight per cent in the next six-eight months."We have always taken full insurance for the commodities stored with us. Either depositories or owners take full insurance of the value of the commodities, without which we do not issue warehouse receipts, through which depositories can avail of funds from financial institutions," said Anil Choudhary, managing director of National Bulk Handling Corporation.Insurers said with frequent price fluctuations, the premium for commodities covers rises/falls 20 per cent, based on the price cycle. For commodities more prone to damage from floods, cyclones, etc, the premium is higher, with the insured sum equal to the value of the goods."The premium amount for high-risk commodities such as cotton, which is highly inflammable, is always substantially higher. For commodities stored within factory premises, too, the premium is very high," Choudhary said.While both private and public sector general insurers offer covers for commodities, the fidelity guarantee is a new growth area for insurers. Under fidelity guarantee insurance, a company provides to indemnify the insured against a direct pecuniary loss due to frauds, etc. The size of the cover depends on the type of commodity being dealt with."Though banks providing finances to WSP usually took insurance covers to protect against losses, those taking financial assistance from other private sources weren't covered under insurance. With the regulator asking all WSPs to take complete insurance covers, there could be an immediate rise of 15-20 per cent in business, especially for state-owned insurers, as all such providers will have to take a cover to avoid huge liabilities later," said a senior official with a public sector insurer.He added initially, packaged policies covering risks to commodities, as well as liability covers to a particular WSP, would be considered.

Cotton acreage hits new record

The area under cotton cultivation in India has reached a record high of 12.25 million hectares and is expected to go up further to 12.5 mha, as sowing is still on in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.This is set to push production to a new high, too. At the moment, however, those in the industry do not foresee a glut in the market, since they expect a rise in domestic consumption and of buying by other countries. Also, cotton traders and textile mills believe the record production would not lead to a price decline problem for farmers.The Union agriculture ministry says farmers across the country seem to have shifted to cotton this kharif season because of stable prices and a better yield last year. "Also, last year, soybean farmers had to suffer because of high moisture, resulting in less return," said J S Sandhu, agriculture commissioner. He said sowing in Gujarat, a major producer, had reached three mha, breaking records over the past 50 years.Arun Dalal, a leading trader in this city, said there would be good export demand, checking a likely decline in import from China. "There is no possibility of a glut, as the domestic consumption has (also) been rising over the past few years. Further, there have been reports of reduction in the crop in Australia and a rise in consumption in Bangladesh. Turkey, Vietnam, Brazil and Indonesia are all likely to source cotton from India. All this is going to provide a cushion," explained Dalal. "Domestically, new spinning capacity is also being added."According to K Selvaraju of the South Indian Mills Association, 1.5-2 mn spindles capacity is being added to the current 56 mn in the country. "We do not foresee any glut in cotton. Prices may have fallen but momentum in mills is picking up. Our fabric and garment industries will also pick up. More, due to delayed monsoon, the bulk of supply is expected in December as against the usual October-November. By then, demand-supply is expected to match," he said.

The industry estimates domestic cotton consumption is likely to increase to 3.05-3.1 mn bales (a bale is 170 kg), up from 29 mn bales in the earlier cotton year (October-September). Home consumption is also expected to increase on the basis of increased yarn export, due to newer markets. “Yarn production is increasing gradually. Garment exports are also expected to get better. Even if there is surplus cotton, it will get exported to Bangladesh, Vietnam and Korea. The China situation might not impact consumption in the long run,” said DK Nair, secretary-general of the Confederation of Indian Textile Industry.Prices are expected to go down but not by enough to impact the income of farmers, believes the industry. Its experts say the cost of production is around Rs 22,000 a ha in rain-fed regions, Rs 28,000 a ha in areas with canal-based irrigation and Rs 33,000 a ha where farmers use drip irrigation. Dalal feels the price of cotton is unlikely to dip below Rs 38,000 a candy (356 kg), due to higher production in 2014-15. Prices and those of yarn have already seen a correction, due to low market sentiment and reduced import from China. In July, cotton was Rs 43,000 a candy of 356 kg and of 30-count yarn at Rs 230 a kg. However, at present, prices are Rs 40,000-41,000 a candy; yarn is Rs 215 per kg.According to J C Ladha, executive director of Rajasthan Spinning and Weaving Mills, the impact will not be much on farmers since cotton prices are expected to fall to Rs 36,000-37,000 a candy, still higher than the global one of Rs 31,000-32,000 a candy. “Moreover, the minimum support price has also been fixed at Rs 36,000 per candy. If the prices go below that, we are sure CCI (government-owned Cotton Corporation of India) will purchase from farmers,” he said.

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

Pepper prices to remain weak

Pepper prices are seen weak due to imports from Sri Lanka and reports that 6,000 tonne seized by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) would be released into the market.In the global market,supply from Indonesia and Brazil is likely to keep the market under pressure in the coming days. India isthe largest consumer of pepper in the world and the second largest producer after Vietnam.Prices in the terminal market of Kochi have declined by R50 per kg from the peak of R750 per kg reached during June.India is still the costliest origin at $12,400 per tonne for ASTA grade compared to $9,500 of Vietnam. “Imports from Sri Lanka have pulled the market down and it isreported that more than 1,000 tonne has reached the North India market via the Mumbai port. Indonesia is active in the market and Brazil is expected to be active from next month. According to official reports, Vietnam has already sold 1, 25,000 tonne,” Jojan Malayil of Kochi-based Bafna Enterprises said.

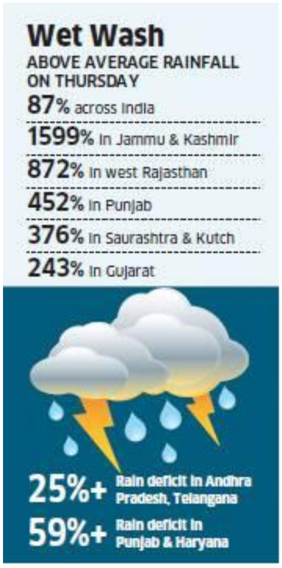
He feels that demand may pick up in the coming days as Europeans and US buyers become active after the annual break.Kishore Shamji, a senior exporter and member of India Pepper and Spice Trade Association (IPSTA), estimates the market to remain weak as supply improves in the domestic market.“It is reported that 6,000 tonne would be released soon from judicial custody. This would bring down the pressure in the market. Imports from Sri Lanka would go up by 1,000 tonne to touch a total of 2,000 tonne. Prices are likely to come under pressure,” he added. FSSAI had seized nearly 6,800 tonne in December 2012 to investigate charges of adulteration. It has released nearly 800 tonne so far.Indian supply continues to remain low due to declining production. A paper presented at the last World Spice Congress held at Kochi reported that Indian pepper production for the season of 2013-14 would be 34,000 tonne as against 45,000 tonne reported byInternational Pepper Community (IPC). The IPC annual conclave reports that global production in 2014 would be lower by around 6,000 tonne when compared to this year. According to IPC figures, production during 2013 was pegged around 3,16,832 tonne.Pepper prices in India had touched record levels during May-June due to lower availability and reports of below normal monsoon.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Government to introduce farm income insurance scheme: Agriculture Minister

The government plans to introduce Farm Income Insurance (FII) scheme to give cover on earnings expected from crop yield, Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh said here today. The minister also said that his Ministry would provide soil health cards to all farmers in the country which would inform them about strengths and weakness of their farm soil. "Only subsidy cannot ensure farmers' income. While some states have opted to implement the old National Agriculture Insurance Scheme (NAIS), some opted to implement a modified NAIS. However, Gujarat came up with this idea of an income-based agriculture scheme," Singh said. "We have been holding meetings to finalise the FII scheme. I hope that the Gujarat government will give its guidance to make it effective," Singh said. In 1999, the Government of India introduced a National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS), which operates on the basis of area-based crop insurance to protect farmers against unavoidable perils like drought, heat, insects and others. Later, NAIS was replaced by a modified NAIS, which was introduced during 2010-11. Both NAIS and Modified NAIS provide cover against failure of crop (yield) to farmers. However, FII has been designed to address both crop yield risk as well as price risk to stabilise farmers' incomes. As per the FII scheme, if actual incomes of farmers fall short of guaranteed income, (that is average yield multiplied by minimum support price) then they would be eligible for compensation. FII was first introduced during 2003-04 on a pilot basis in 22 districts of 14 states, after which it was discontinued in 2004. North and Northwest India receive heavy showers; overall monsoon deficit narrows to 14% Heavy showers this week have soaked rain-starved farms across north and northwest India, narrowing the overall monsoon deficit in the country to 14% and accelerating crop growth.The met department on Thursday forecast heavy rainfall to occur in north and northwest India in the next 24 hours. Thursday's rainfall was 87% above average, and in some rain-starved regions such as Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan, it was several times higher than normal, bringing some relief to millions of farmers worried about weak rains in July and August.Water levels in most reservoirs of South India have increased significantly in the past one week. This is good news particularly for farmers in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana where rain deficit was more than 25%.However, in Punjab and Haryana where rain deficit is 59% and above, water levels in Bhakra and Pong reservoirs remain static. On Thursday, the Central Water Commission said Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Odisha,West Bengal, Tripura, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have lesser storage than last year for corresponding period.The country's major reservoirs were filled to 71% (110.22 billion cubic metres) of the total capacity of 155.05 billion cubic metres, down from 82% last year, but better than the 10-year average of 69%.The commission monitors 85 important reservoirs of the country on a weekly basis. AB Pandya, chairman of staterun Central Water Commission said there was unlikely to be a 'crisis situation'. "Situation in Andhra Pradesh reservoir has improved though it remains poor in Punjab and Himachal Pradesh reservoirs. Rains have picked up, but if they become weak the pinch will be felt in rabi planting and hot weather season," he said.Another official at the commission said water level in Gobind Sagar (Bhakra) is 90% (5.593 bcm) of total capacity of 6.23 bcm, down from 93% last year. "The situation is worse in Pong and Thein reservoirs where they are only filled of their capacity from over 85% in the previous year," the person said. Central Water Commission officials said reservoirs position in Andhra Pradesh which also cover the newly formed state of

Telangana like Srisailam, Nagarjuna Sagar, Sriramsagar and Somasila improved considerably.Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh, too, had better water levels than at this time last year. In Punjab and Haryana, seasonal rain deficit was the highest for the country at 59% and 63%, respectively, followed by west Uttar Pradesh at 57% and Telangana and Marathwada at 37% rain deficit.The monsoon, which brings about three quarters of India's annual rains, usually arrives over the southern coast in June and spreads to the rest of the country over the next month.Reservoirs normally fill up rapidly in July and create a water reserve for irrigation, drinking and power generation until the following year's monsoon.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Gitam scholars patent millet biscuits

Researchers of Gitam University's food science and technology department have successfully registered a patent for millet rich biscuits. The researchers -- Layam Anitha, M M Krishna and Pooja Mandlik -- worked on developing the millet rich biscuits under the project named ?Millet Delight'. The trio also named their patented biscuits the same.The research team said that at the present most of the products available in the Indian biscuit market are formulated with wheat flour or refined wheat flour. However, the biscuits developed by the Gitam trio are fibre rich and gluten free and at the same time being delicious, full of energy and cost effective."Not only is the cost of making them less than half that of biscuits using health grains like oats and ragi, the processing of millets also gives a distinct aroma which adds another characteristic to the biscuits," one of the researchers explained. Pointing out that the project had been taken up as micronutrient malnutrition has been a persistent problem in the country, the researchers pointed out that a large number of child deaths are caused by malnutrition, particularly lack of vitamin A, iron, iodine, zinc and folic acid.Releasing the biscuits at a programme organized as part of the ongoing National Nutrition Week, Gitam University VC Prof G Subrahmanyam said that the newly developed biscuits can enhance the health of consumers and support the government initiative to eradicate malnutrition among children. He said the varsity was open to tying up with any fast moving consumer good company keen on marketing their biscuits.Noting that the ministry of food processing and industries is supporting Gitam in establishing a cashew processing unit as part of the government's efforts to train local youth in the food processing sector, he said Vizag has a good potential to house food processing industries.The Gitam VC said that trained human resource is highly needed in the coming years to cater to the growing demand for manpower in the food processing sector. He suggested that researchers prepare healthier and tastier next generation of foods with a more user friendly ingredient list.

The Telegraph
calcutta, india

Tea gardens to be mapped

Tocklai Tea Research Institute has launched a novel project to prepare digital maps of the tea gardens in the Northeast, which scientists believe would be helpful for planning as well as having a digital archive of all garden-related information.The deputy director of Tea Research Association, R.M. Bhagat, told **The Telegraph** today that the process has already been started in a few gardens in Assam and the same would be carried out in tea estates of Bengal, too, according to industry requirements.

“Tea garden maps available with various tea gardens in Assam and Bengal are prepared by civil engineering survey methods and are available as ammonia copies. These maps are not in digital format, nor do they have any geo-referencing incorporated in them. These maps will now be converted into a GIS environment along with all the data related to the particular garden,” he said.The scientist said data in the digital map would give details about planting materials, pruning programme, plant population, age of bushes, yield of various clones, infrastructure and soil properties analysed by the garden over the years, information about pests and various diseases of tea bushes.Bhagat said that the project would be a major technical leap for the tea industry as all data related to the particular tea garden would be available at the click of a button.“A manager or the owner of a particular garden would know what exactly is happening in his garden as well as the current status. This would help in preparing for the future,” he said.The maps can be periodically updated.

N. Muraleedharan, director, TRA, said a request has to be made by interested tea garden to Tocklai to have the garden mapped digitally and a minimal cost has to be borne by the owner for this. The entire information on this is available on the Tocklai website.“On receipt of request and the requisite fee, the garden will be asked to submit the ammonia copy of their surveyed garden map. Subsequently a GPS survey of the garden would be carried out,” he said.He said that on completion of the survey, the digital product would be delivered to the garden along with open source software, which could be installed in the computer of the garden. “A short training would also be given to executives of the tea garden for proper handling and use of the digital maps and the data would be upgraded when necessary,” he said.