

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020852320300.htm>

Centre to set up rural business hubs in five districts

Special Correspondent

VILLUPURAM: The Union Ministry of Panchayat Raj has selected five districts in Tamil Nadu for setting up the “Rural Business Hubs (RBH)” with the objective of tapping the local resources for the economic uplift of the people, according to R.Palanisamy, District Collector.

Addressing a preliminary meeting of officials on the measures to be taken for the formation of the RBH here on Saturday, Mr. Palanisamy said that it was proposed to establish the hubs in Villupuram, Thanjavur, Tiruvarur, Nagapattinam and Krishnagiri districts.

The Union Ministry had designated Periyar Maniammai University, Thanjavur, as the “gateway agency” for the implementation of the project. In the identified villages the officials would gather information about the extent of area under cultivation, crop varieties, types of industries, raw material availability and the economic status of the people.

Based on the inputs the officials would prepare the reports delineating the ways and means of harnessing these resources for the betterment of the villagers. The Collector said that under the project necessary measures would be adopted for augmenting milk supply and streamlining the milk procurement system.

Simultaneously strategies would be drawn up for marketing milk and milk products. Through the project silk worm rearing, cattle breeding, vermicompost and upgradation of village communication centres would be done. The Collector said that the banks would be tied with the selected villages for extending financial assistance and grant, wherever permitted.

Project directors from Periyar Maniammai University M.Gabriel, Swaminathan and Jayachandran, Assistant General Manager of NABARD Mahendran and others participated.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020857310300.htm>

The tale of price rise and family budget city pulse

City Bureau

Making both ends meet remains the biggest challenge for most of the families

— Photo: V.GANESAN



***Long wait:* The rise in prices of essential commodities seems to reflect in the crowd at fair price shops. Waiting for the financial pressure to go down, customers explore alternatives.**

CHENNAI: “How do we cut down on our expenses?” — this is one question that several families are increasingly pondering over. The rise in prices of essential commodities in the last few months has put households in a fix, leaving them with little choice.

It is not uncommon to hear families talk about their soaring monthly grocery bill, or see customers relentlessly bargaining with the vegetable vendor to save a few rupees. Families with school-going children have the additional task of paying the ever-increasing school fees. Professionals, too, are not spared.

Business development executive Anupama Aravamudhan says her transport expenses have gone up several times in the last few months. “I used to pay Rs.80 for an autorickshaw ride from T. Nagar to Tidel Park four months ago. Two months ago, they demanded Rs.100. And now, I pay Rs.120,” she says.

With the price of one commodity or service being blamed for the rise of another, customers are, indeed, at the receiving end. What are the market trends adding to the complexity?

Wholesale rates

Rates at the wholesale rice and pulses market are currently fluctuating owing to the arrival of new crop. According to Amara Visweswara Rao, president, Tamil Nadu Food Grains Merchants’ Association, the last few days have seen the price of rice drop marginally.

“Today (February 5), new variety of raw rice costs Rs. 25-26, while the old variety costs Rs.30-34. The price of boiled rice ranges between Rs.25 and Rs. 29. Prices will stabilise soon,” he adds.

S. Chandra Mohan, wholesaler selling pulses in George Town, observes that many residents from the city are coming to George Town to make monthly purchases.

“We don’t mind selling in smaller quantities, as some of them come regularly.”

On possible reasons for this shift, he says: “The retail market is usually soon to reflect a price rise here, but when there is a decrease in the wholesale market, retailers rarely bring down prices, citing additional costs incurred.”

However, some like Ram Bhat, the proprietor of Mathsya restaurant, Egmore, feel that the difference between rates in the wholesale and retail market is blurring for many commodities. “If we go to the wholesale market, we would have to spend on transportation, right? The issue is not just the price rise, but the fluctuation.”

Retaining regular customers also means being careful in altering the prices in businesses like his. “The prices of a host of commodities such as vegetables, pulses and milk have gone up, but we have not hiked our rates correspondingly,” he says.

Alternatives?

Running a household is no easy task, either. The financial pressure is mounting, prompting a few to consider options they may not have otherwise.

P. Shaji, for instance, earns over Rs. 15,000 per month. But meeting the regular expenses has become rather difficult now. “My monthly budget has increased by over 40 per cent from last year. I am looking at getting at least sugar from the ration shop,” says the employee of a private firm, busy trying to upgrade his ration card.

His attempt to upgrade his ration card and a look at the crowd at PDS outlets points to a possible change in trend. More middle class households seem to be purchasing from ration shops.

According to officials of the Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection Department, the response to PDS initiatives among the 22 lakh ration card holders in Chennai has improved. “The rice offtake has been relatively high. The rice sales for December 2009 in north Chennai for regular PDS are 12,117 tonnes and 9,073 tonnes in south Chennai,” says a senior official.

“A large number of regular card-holders who usually buy items such as tuvar and urad dal, are buying other items too,” he adds.

Healthcare

Healthcare is another area that families have to spend on.

The State-sponsored health insurance scheme has offered promise to some like Parimala, a domestic help in Velachery.

She recently admitted her son to the Government Kilpauk Hospital for surgery. “The medicines are supplied free but sometimes I visit several government hospitals before getting the required dosage of medicine for my son.”

Mala Umapathy’s husband, a retired bank employee, recently underwent a surgery.

“When he was working, all our medical bills were paid by the bank. Now that it has tied up with an insurance firm and I don’t know how it will work out,” she says.

Farida Begum, a resident of Cement Road, Washermanpet, is a homemaker.

Her husband, employed as a tailor in a sewing unit, earns Rs. 100 a day as wages.

“We have not yet received the identity card for the health insurance benefit,” she says.

The card could be of help, she believes, as her older daughter was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes and is being treated at the Government Children’s Hospital, Egmore. Her daughters go to a private school that charges Rs.2,480 as annual fee.

While families like hers try and avail themselves of State assistance through schemes, making both ends meet remains the biggest challenge for them.

(With inputs from R. Sujatha, Liffy Thomas, Aloysius Xavier Lopez and Meera Srinivasan)

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020854800200.htm>

Sugarcane growers’ plan Statewide stir

Special Correspondent

MADURAI: Various speakers unanimously resolved to stage demonstrations in front of sugar mills on February 24 across Tamil Nadu in a bid to draw the attention of the governments to fulfil their demands.

Representatives from different farmers’ associations from as many as 10 to 15 districts had come here on Sunday to discuss the modalities of the agitations.

Speaking to reporters, All India Kisan Sabha State president K. Balakrishnan and Tamil Nadu Sugarcane Farmers’ Association state president N. Palanisamy said that all farmers’ would come together and fight in one voice seeking an increase of Rs 2000 per ton for sugarcane, Rs 1,500 per ton for paddy, to ban Bt. Brinjal in Tamil Nadu and provide crop insurance to the ryots.

They also condemned the assault on farmers’ by the police who had come to roads demanding adequate water for irrigation in Manamadurai, Sivaganga district near here recently.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020855040300.htm>

Merchants oppose Food Safety Act

Staff Reporter

MADURAI: The Tamil Nadu Foodgrains Merchants Association has opposed the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and urged the Centre to incorporate some changes into the Act.

Association president S.P. Jeyapragasam said that referral laboratories for performing food analysis at nominal costs should be established in all States. The Act should also permit a 12-month period to give effect to changes in labels, as and when announced, to enable traders to address logistics.

Penalties have been increased over 100 times in the new Act as compared to the earlier Prevention of Food Adulteration Act 1954, resulting in a maximum of Rs. 10 lakh.

The association wanted the ceilings for penalties to be fixed at Rs. 25,000.

He also called for restricting certain powers of the Food Safety Officer such as the right to take sample from an open container, seize account books and records.

The samples collected should be kept in glass or plastic air tight containers rather than kept packed in wrapper/polythene packets to prevent tampering. The Act prohibits the addition of sodium bi-carbonate in 'appalams' (pappad), which is a traditional south Indian food. As this component was not harmful to health, it should be allowed, he said.

The association feared that if the Act was amended, the jobs of lakhs of workers in the food industries sector could be jeopardised.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020857290300.htm>

Training to establish agri-clinics

Staff Reporter

MADURAI: The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University is organising a two-month training during March and April to establish agri-clinics and agribusiness centres.

According to a press release, the training will cover entrepreneurial development,

communication skills, project preparation, project management, agribusiness management and related areas. The training module includes theory, practical, field visits, exposure visits and hands on experience. Certificates would be issued to participants who may utilise it to approach banks for availing start up loans up to Rs.10 lakh for viable projects.

Unemployed graduates or diploma holders who have passed from any agricultural university or veterinary university are eligible and may apply before February 19 to the Professor, Department of Agricultural and Rural Management, Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies, TNAU-Coimbatore-3. The training would be offered at free of cost which includes boarding and lodging.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020857320300.htm>

Water level

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 112.90 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 20 cusecs and a discharge of 400 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 38.98 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 217 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs. Combined Periyar credit stood at 1,111 mcft.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020854760200.htm>

Ryot registers bumper harvest through SRI method

M. Balaganessin

TIRUCHI: A farmer of Manikandam block in the district has registered a bumper harvest of paddy through the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method this season.

M. Karuppudaiar of Kallikudi village in this block, noted for large deposit of alkaline soil, had raised the BPT-5102 variety, popularly known as 'Andhra Ponni' on his five-acre field. The per acre yield was 105 bags of paddy, equivalent to 15.75 tonnes a hectare – the highest in the district under the SRI technique so far this season.

V. Ramkumar, Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge), said that about 23,200 out of the total 73,000 hectares of paddy had been brought under the SRI this season. Harvest had been completed at nine of the total 75 SRI plots. Mr. Karuppudaiar had registered the maximum yield so far this season.

This was the third year in succession that this farmer had raised the paddy under the SRI method. The 'Farm School' established in the village under the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) programme, guided the farmers about

the crop protection and cultivation practices for the SRI paddy. A total of 25 farmers of the village were enrolled as members of the school. “Right from raising the crop up to cultivation, the farmers were guided properly. Soil sampling, seed treatment, nursery and main field preparation, spacing and weeding, integrated management of nutrient, pest and water were also explained to the farmers,” said S. Sivaraj, Deputy Director of Agriculture.

Farmers adhered to the crop protection and water management techniques suggested by the Farm Information and Advisory Centre of Manikandam block. Although a major part of the block was prone for alkaline soil, the fields were suited for the normal paddy varieties.

T. Soundiah, Collector, who inaugurated the harvest, appreciated the efforts made by the farmers in adopting the SRI method. He also distributed certificates to the members of the Farm School.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020855680300.htm>

Mettur level

TIRUCHI: The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 76.83 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 868 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

Date:08/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/08/stories/2010020851210200.htm>

Farmers switch over to coriander

J. Praveen Paul Joseph

— Photo: N. Rajesh



YIELDS RESULTS: S. Raja Mohamed, Assistant Director of Horticulture, inspecting coriander crop at Vilathikulam block in Tuticorin district.

Tuticorin: Vilathikulam block in the district has witnessed a sizable increase in area of coriander crop raised under rain-fed condition, according to S. Raja Mohamed, Assistant Director of Horticulture, Vilathikulam.

In spite of unfavourable climatic conditions in the drought-prone area utilising the

late rainfall in November, farmers had increased their cultivation of coriander, instead of chillies, as advised by horticulture officials. About 1,160 hectares of coriander had been brought under cultivation till December, as against 627 hectares during the corresponding period last year.

Coriander was raised both as intercrop with chillies and as single crop. S. Karuppsamy, a farmer from A. Kumarapuram who cultivated coriander as an intercrop with chillies, has started harvesting and processing the coriander grains. C. Rasaiyah, another farmer from the same village, said that he had cultivated both onion and coriander as intercrops with “gundu” chillies on three acres.

Buyers from other districts have started procuring the coriander grains at Karisalkulam and Vilathikulam areas.

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By Express News Service
08 Feb 2010 03:42:00 AM IST

‘Re 1 scheme can’t ensure food security’

ERODE: The state government’s initiative to distribute rice at Re 1 per kg to the poor cannot ensure food security, unless and until other essential commodities needed to tackle malnourishment are simultaneously given at subsidised prices to the people, said Sabine Pabst, Asia coordinator of Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN), a German-based NGO.

Addressing reporters here on Saturday, she charged that “the public distribution system is not functioning well in the state. In many areas, essential items are not being supplied properly from the ration shops. Schemes like giving two acres of land to the landless poor have also not been properly implemented.

Sustainable agriculture growth has also not been given due importance to protect small farmers.” Sabine stressed that only if four percent growth is ensured in agriculture and rural development, poor people can benefit from social security schemes. “In India, the GDP might be growing around 9.5 percent but crucially in the farm sector, the growth rate is just 2.5 percent,” she observed. Referring to the controversy over large-scale land acquisition in Thalavadi, Kadambur and Bargur Hills, she said that FIAN has received several complaints that the land of poor tribals has been grabbed by huge corporate concerns. “The land acquisition bid at Thirumangalam, Madurai, for creating a special economic zone (SEZ) there as well as the Kerala government’s move to give water to Coca Cola at Plachimada in Palakkad district are also under the scanner. Our team will visit these areas and after that we will reveal the facts to the press at Coimbatore on February 13. This is not a campaign against the respective state governments, we only want to protect the rights of the poor,” she stressed.

Sabine said that the NGO, functioning in 60 countries, is also reporting its studies to the UN. “India is a signatory of the UN charter on right to food, economic and social responsibility. But we have detected nearly 100 violations of the charter across the country,” she added.

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By Express News Service
08 Feb 2010 09:50:42 AM IST

'Bt Brinjal, foreign infiltrators greatest bane'

BANGALORE: BT brinjal and the foreign infiltrators are the greatest bane for this country. These two have been destroying the basic indigenoussness and integrity of the country, felt national chief of Rashtriya Swayamsevaka Sangha Mohan Bhagawat.

Participating in the public programme of the three-day national level convention of the Rashtriya Seva Bharati held at Yelahanka on Sunday, he wondered why the union government did not take a unilateral decision to deny an entry to BT brinjal, instead of holding a public hearing.

Modified seed varieties like BT brinjal will upset the traditional agricultural system prevailing in the country.

Multinational companies like Monsanto will spoil the country. India has over 4000 indigenous seed varieties.

Farmers of this country have developed these seeds from their traditional knowledge and no scientist has developed so many seed varieties, he pointed out.

Referring to foreign infiltrators into the country, he felt that the people at all levels should be educated to fight such elements. There is an emergency to take necessary steps to prevent infiltrators entering our country, he said.

Service to the people should be aimed at overall development of the society and the individual, but should not become tool for religious conversion.

Without directly referring to the effort of other religions to convert Hindus to their religion, he described religious conversions as a heinous crime.

He said the RSS had been preparing a team of youths who could selflessly serve and build the society.

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By Express News Service
08 Feb 2010 03:54:00 AM IST

Jaggi Vasudev hits out at Bt brinjal

COIMBATORE: Voicing protest against introduction of Bt Brinjal in India, founder of Isha Foundation Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev on Sunday said there seems to be some commercial motive behind bringing in the genetically modified (GM) food into the country.

He told reporters at Isha Yoga Centre at the foothills of Velliangiri in Coimbatore on Sunday, when the European nations have banned the GM food due to its hazardous nature, why should they find a place in India. "It seems there is some commercial interest in introducing the GM food into country," he alleged.

The spiritual leader said, the ordinary brinjal is having problems with insect infestation.

"In fact, the gene modification in the vegetable keeps away the insect from infesting or eating it. When other living organisms don't consume it because of its poisonous effect, it is only to be presumed that eating those GM foods will also do harm to the human beings," he said.

Jaggi Vasudev said the Bt brinjal is the first in the list of the genetically engineered foods being introduced with a commercial motive into the country. "Once if the people accepted it, then there would be a slew of other GM foods that will slowly find their way into the Indian market," he added.

Pointing out that the Western multinational companies hold patent for these GM foods, he said, when the farmers in the country tend to use these genetically engineered seeds, the royalties for it would go to the European countries.

Further, Jaggi Vasudev said, the Bt brinjal is being introduced without proper trials to declare it safe for human consumption. "Once if allowed into the food chain, then the harmful nature of the GM foods will only take a toll on the health of the people.

This apart such GE seeds will also destroy the bio-diversity of the nation," he added.

Jaggi Vasudev said he would express his opinion to the Environment Minister against introducing Bt brinjal in the country.

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Richer India makes the world poorer: Economist

Rukmini Shrinivasan, TNN, 8 February 2010, 03:51am IST

NEW DELHI: Angus Deaton, the Princeton economist regarded as world's foremost authority on cross-country income data, has cast serious doubts on the World Bank's last upward revision of global poverty figures and India's statistics are at the centre of the storm.

The world became poorer as a result of a combination of India's economic growth and its low poverty line, Deaton, who is president of the American Economic Association, said in his presidential address to the AEA in Atlanta, in the US last month. India's extremely low poverty line was so strongly depressing the average poverty line for poor countries that India's exit from this group because of its economic growth resulted in the average rising.

The international poverty line is calculated by taking the national poverty lines of a group of the poorest countries in the world, converting them to US dollars by using a Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) index, and taking a simple average. For its latest 2008 revision, the bank for the first time changed the set of poor countries used, since new data was available through its International Comparison Program (ICP), and India was dropped on account of its growth. The new poverty line was updated from \$1.08 per day at 1993 prices to \$1.25 per day at 2005 prices. This raised the number of poor by 400 million to 1.4 billion.

Since India's poverty line is low compared to its living standards, as Indian average incomes rose and it moved out of the group of selected countries, the global poverty line rose and consequently so did the number of persons defined as poor, Deaton showed.

"In effect, India and the world have become poorer because India has become richer!" said Deaton in his address. If Guinea-Bissau, which has a much smaller population but a high poverty line relative to its living standards were to get richer and go past the cut-off line, the global poverty line would decrease as would the number of poor. If poverty falls in any country included in the counts, and increases nowhere else, global poverty should fall. The current procedure does not satisfy that basic requirement. Nor does it satisfy the property that global poverty should fall by no more than the fall in poverty in individual countries, Deaton observed.

An alternative procedure is to calculate the global poverty line by averaging the poverty lines

of all countries, but after weighting them for the number of poor in each country. By this method, the Indian poverty line would receive about a third of the total weight, instead of being completely absent from the current \$1.25 per day poverty line. Another alternative Deaton suggests is that the Indian poverty line be converted to dollars and used as the global poverty line, provided that the line does not shift if India gets richer.

Nobody ever said that India had to be in the reference group of countries forever, countered Martin Ravallion, the director of the development research group of the bank and one of three authors on whose research the 2008 revision was based, in an email to TOI.

The new sample of countries implies a higher international line, but is more representative of the developing world, Ravallion added. "As long as we agree on the principle that this line should be representative of the lines found in low-income countries, we must accept that poverty is higher than we thought by those standards," Ravallion reiterated in his email.

None of this necessarily means that poverty is improving in India. Since Deaton and the bank are discussing global poverty estimates, they do not get into the veracity of the Indian poverty line. In fact, both admit that global comparisons are mainly of significance to international NGOs, while national policy is based on country-level estimates prepared by national agencies.

At home, following a tortuous history of arguments over the Indian poverty line, the Suresh Tendulkar committee in its report to the Planning Commission two months ago suggested a significant upward revision of India's low poverty line from Rs 356.30 (rural) and Rs 538.60 (urban) per capita per month to Rs 446.68 (rural) and Rs 578.80 (urban) per capita per month for 2004-5. This is about \$1.17 at 2005 PPP, closer to the World Bank's \$1.25 figure. This implies that had India updated its poverty line earlier, the global poverty line might have been reset at \$1.25 much earlier instead of being recently revised.

DECCAN **Chronicle** *On The Web*

[India to study equity of carbon space](#)

Feb 07 2010

Seeking to make constructive contribution to the climate debate, India on Sunday said it had commissioned a study on equity of existing carbon space in the atmosphere, which could be crucial in determining the quantum or reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases. "We have commissioned a study on equity of carbon space.

I have asked Arvind Subramanian, a noted economist with the Peterson Institute for International Economics, Washington to prepare a paper on this," Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh told reporters here. He said the Subramanian was expected to submit the paper in April.

The issue of equity of carbon space would be discussed at an international workshop being organised here in May ahead of the formal climate talks in Bonn. Carbon space refers to the gap between existing carbon volumes in the atmosphere and the volume that will be dangerous for environment.

Past emissions of greenhouse gases from rich countries have taken up much of that space and the developing countries are now standing up for their share. The conference of experts would debate on the equity of future flows and not on the historical perspective.

"We do not have clarity on how equity is to be enshrined in international agreements," Ramesh said at the 10th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit here. He noted that detailed separate studies by Jeffery Frankel of Harvard University, Nobel laureate Michael Spence and Potsdam Institute, Germany were available.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/latest-news/india-study-equity-carbon-space-425>

DECCAN Chronicle *On The Web*

Veggie prices dip on sibling rivalry

By DC Correspondent

Feb 08 2010

Feb. 7: Prices of vegetables and fruits have plummeted suddenly in North Chennai thanks to a rivalry between Tamil Nadu Vanigar Sangam Peravai leader T. Vellayan and his elder brother T. Padmanabhan, both running large shops in Perambur.

The rates for wholesale fruits and vegetables at the Bharathi Kai Kani Sirappu Angadi, run by Mr Vellayan and 10 other partners, are even lesser than the rates at the Koyambedu wholesale market that business has become dull for the wholesalers since the Bharathi outlet opened on January 27. For instance, a kilo of carrots is priced at Rs 10 at the Perambur markets whereas it was atleast Rs 2 more at the Koyambedu wholesale market.

"Since the brothers split and Vellayan started his own outlet, the two have been competing with each other in reducing the prices of perishables in order to attract customers. "This has spelt doom for many of us here at Koyambedu since a large number of retailers from Perambur, Kolathur, Madhavaram and surrounding areas do not come to Koyambedu any more for their wholesale shopping," says N. Manikandan, a wholesale vendor at the Koyambedu market.

When contacted, Mr Vellayan said that the prices at their Bharathi Kai Kani Sirappu Angadi were lesser than those at Koyambedu mainly due to the smart business strategies they adopted. "We predict the daily rates and purchase surplus goods when the rates go down. Hence, when the vegetable prices increase the following day, we are able to sell it for rates that are lesser than at the market," he said. He clarified that he did not have any rivalry with his brother.

Vellayan's elder brother T. Padmanabhan said that business had been brisk for the last few weeks due to the price margins between Koyambedu market and their outlet.

"But, we all buy from the same wholesalers at Koyambedu. The only difference is that I am selling my goods at cost price," he said.

Source URL:

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/veggie-prices-dip-sibling-rivalry-562>

Green energy: Airvoice lines up 13,000 mw

Airvoice Group, a Gurgaon-based entity with core interests in commodity exports, has launched an ambitious diversification into green energy with a plan to produce 13,000 megawatts (mw) of power.

The company is expecting an estimated investment of \$50 billion (around Rs 2 lakh crore) over a period of 10 years. Company officials claim it is the largest green energy project in the world.

Sanjay Kapoor, chairman and managing director of Airvoice Group, said the company plans to generate 10,000 mw through solar energy and 3,000 mw through wind farms that would be set up on 50,000 acres of wasteland in Karnataka.

"We have identified 12 high potential sites in Karnataka for the solar energy project," Kapoor told Hindustan Times. "Power will be produced by photo voltaic technology (power produced by the heat generated through sunlight rather than sunlight directly)."

The company has also identified four districts in Karnataka where it intends to set up its 3,000 mw wind farms.

"In the first phase, we will have 100 mw of solar and 200 mw of wind energy," Kapoor said, adding that public sector Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam will be its joint venture partner with a 48 per cent equity. The first phase would be commissioned in the next 36 months.

An initial investment of Rs 1,200 crore would be required for the wind energy project and Rs 2,000 crore for the solar energy project, Kapoor said.

"Tendering for turbines will start in the next 20-25 days. We are in talks with several companies, including Eurowinds and Suzlon for sourcing our turbines," he said.

Each wind turbine generates about 1.5 mw of electricity. The 1.5 mw wind turbine would cost Rs 5.80 crore and it costs Rs 7 crore to generate 1 mw of wind power while 1 mw of thermal power costs about between Rs 4 and 5 crore.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/505712.aspx>

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Zia Haq , Hindustan Times

Email Author

New Delhi, February 08, 2010

First Published: 00:32 IST(8/2/2010)

Last Updated: 00:37 IST(8/2/2010)

Bt brinjal: Philippines, Bangla watching India

Bangladesh and the Philippines are both waiting for India to make up its mind about Bt Brinjal. India's decision will influence theirs.

Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh is set to take a decision on February 10.

The two countries have run their own tests to evaluate the yield and pest-resistance capacity of Bt Brinjal. But they want India to tell them if it is safe enough for humans to consume.

As with all genetically modified foods, Bt Brinjal has aroused enormous controversy in India, with a number of public advocacy groups resisting the move to allow its commercial production.

“We are awaiting India’s decision. We are relying on Indian data,” Md. Yousuf Mian, director-general of the state-run Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) told Hindustan Times from Dhaka.

“Both countries are looking up to India as a leader since they do not have the capacity for full-line evaluation of Bt brinjal,” Vijay Raghavan, South Asia regional in-charge of ABSP-2 said, speaking from Hyderabad.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/506517.aspx>

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