

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021251730300.htm>

Namakkal uzhavar santhai to serve ice creams too

Special Correspondent

District Collector behind this novel venture

— Photo: Special Arrangement



For refreshment: Collector U. Sagayam (left) inaugurating an ice cream parlour at Uzhavan Unavagam in Namakkal uzhavar santhai on Wednesday.

NAMAKKAL: For the first time in the State, the Namakkal uzhavar santhai (farmers' shandy) has started serving lip-smacking ice cream varieties made of natural ingredients and with natural flavours to its customers.

The ice creams will be made of fruits, pure milk, butter, sugar and other ingredients. No artificial ingredient will be added.

Collector U. Sagayam, the brain behind the 'Uzhavan Unavagam' (farmers' hotel), first of its kind in the State, where only traditional food is served, is instrumental for this novel venture too.

The district's Lead Bank, Indian Bank, came forward to provide loan under the Prime Minister's employment guarantee scheme to Murugesan of Belukurichi to procure the ice cream vending machine.

The same was installed and opened on Wednesday.

Collector Sagayam, Indian Bank Deputy General Manager Mahadevan and others also relished the natural ice cream. Mr. Sagayam hit upon the idea of opening the farmers' hotel at the santhai since the infrastructure was left unutilised after the market hours.

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021261740300.htm>

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 76.38 feet on Thursday against its full level of 120 feet.

The inflow was 833 cusecs and the discharge, 1,800 cusecs.

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021254170500.htm>

“Unregulated FDI poses a direct threat to economy”

Staff Reporter

CHENNAI: India's continuing ambition to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) poses a direct threat to the country's economic liberty, said State Secretary of the Communist Party of India D. Pandian on Wednesday.

Speaking in a national conference at Loyola College on the “Impact of FDI on the Indian Economy,” Mr. Pandian criticised authorities for the preferential treatment handed out to foreign investors. Instead of negotiating terms on an equal basis, foreign investors are treated like “royal guests,” he said.

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021258300800.htm>

Target to procure 30,000 tonnes of paddy this fiscal

Staff Reporter

A total of 30 procurement centres to be established

MADURAI: Joint Registrar of Cooperatives K.V.S. Kumar said that a paddy procurement target of 30,000 tonnes through the cooperatives had been fixed for the current financial year.

A total of 30 procurement centres would be established through the 20 cooperative societies in the district. This figure was more than double that of last year's figures of 14,000 tonnes, he said.

DPC inaugurated

He was inaugurating a direct purchase centre (DPC) for paddy procurement established at Munduvelampatti by Manalpatti Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society in Chellampatti panchayat union on Wednesday.

Dr. Kumar said that under the State Government's direct purchase scheme, paddy was being procured directly from farmers through the cooperative societies and supplied to the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation.

He also urged the farmers to ensure that the moisture content in their produce was low. The minimum support price determined by the Government for Grade 'A' variety was Rs. 1,100 per quintal and for ordinary paddy Rs. 1,050.

Several officials took part in the function, a release said.

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021259790300.htm>

Water level

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Thursday stood at 112.30 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 218 cusecs and a discharge of 400 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 38.45 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 59 cusecs and a discharge of 260 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 984 mcft.

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021251110800.htm>

A sound decision

In placing a moratorium on the release of Bt brinjal till independent scientific studies establish its safety, the Union Environment Ministry has quite rightly addressed both scientific concerns and public opinion. After the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee cleared Bt brinjal in October 2009, the country witnessed widespread protests, some of them by activists who were irrationally opposed to the very concept of Bt or genetic modification. The fears and apprehensions among certain sections, however, gathered greater force in the absence of clear consensus among the scientific community in favour of allowing the genetically modified vegetable to be introduced. In the end, the moratorium was the right way out of a situation that had as much to do with politics as with science. As Union Minister of State for Environment Jairam Ramesh put it, there was no overriding urgency or food security argument to warrant pushing through Bt brinjal in the face of public opposition. With questions raised about the testing procedures, and attention drawn to the lack of long-term toxicity tests and the absence of data from sources independent of the marketing company, there was much to lose and little to gain from forcing Bt brinjal on Indian consumers. Also, opposition from 10 State governments, including those of the major brinjal-producing States, curtailed

the options before the Environment Ministry.

However, the moratorium should be used, not to slow down research on Bt products, which hold long-term cost and supply benefits, but to put in place a system of credible and transparent testing that will win public confidence. Setting up of an independent biotechnology regulatory authority could be one of the first steps. In the case of Bt cotton, the benefits to farmers are proven with reduced input costs and higher yields. True, when it comes to food, the concerns are of an altogether different magnitude. Brinjal is a widely used vegetable that is consumed directly and not in a processed form. The problem is rendered more acute because the practical and cost-related difficulties in labelling GM foods take choice out of the hands of the consumers. But while the government will have to reassure the people and address concerns over the long-term effects on health and the impact on environment of Bt brinjal, there is no place for an absolutist stand against GM foods. To advocate a blanket ban on genetic modification is anti-science and is fraught with grave dangers. More science and better science is the answer to the questions raised by genetic modification, and not unreasoning anti-change activism based on irrational fears.

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Moving towards normal growth

In its advance estimate of economic growth for the current year (2009-10), the Central Statistical Organisation has projected a rate of 7.2 per cent. Though lower than the 7.5 per cent forecast by the Reserve Bank of India recently and the 7.75 per cent by the mid-year economic survey, the CSO's projection gives room for optimism. If it materialises, India might well be seen creeping back towards the high growth trajectory, from which it slipped in 2008-09. After recording an average growth of well above 9 per cent for three years between 2005 and 2008, the GDP rose by 6.7 per cent last year — a commendable performance, given the difficult situation caused by the global financial crisis and the ensuing recession. A rate of above 7 per cent will be further proof of the Indian economy's resilience. Besides, the economy has, by and large, weathered the consequences of a poor south-west monsoon during 2009. The agricultural sector has been particularly hit by severe droughts and floods in several parts of the country. Under the circumstances, a projected growth rate of minus-0.2 per cent for agriculture, though below last year's 1.6 per cent, is better than expected and is unlikely to drag down the overall growth substantially as feared earlier. The contraction is partly attributed to a sharp drop in the production of food grains and oil seeds. Inadequate supply of food articles is the principal factor behind the raging food inflation.

Economic growth during the first half of 2009-10 has averaged 7 per cent, thanks largely to an extraordinary 7.9 per cent growth in the second quarter. While the government expects agriculture to recover sharply during the fourth quarter on top of a bumper winter crop, it is clear that it is the stellar performance of industry that will lift the GDP growth rate above 7 per cent. Manufacturing is expected to grow

at 8.9 per cent. The mining and quarrying sector and the electricity, gas and water supply segment are predicted to post a growth rate of well over 8 per cent. The growth momentum is broad-based, with most of the sub-segments in industry and services performing above their long-term trends. The services sector, which is the traditional growth driver, is forecast to grow at around 8.3 per cent, less than last year. Construction as well as the segment comprising trade, hotels, transport, and communications will grow faster than last year. However, community, social and personal services may not do so well. With the spectre of high inflation looming large, the relatively strong growth might well induce the authorities to opt for a calibrated withdrawal of the stimulus packages.

Date:12/02/2010 URL:

<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/02/12/stories/2010021252760900.htm>

Climate fight is heating up in deep freeze

John M. Broder

As millions of people along the U.S. East Coast hole up in their snowbound homes, the two sides in the climate-change debate are seizing on the mounting drifts to bolster their arguments. Skeptics of global warming are using the record-setting snows to mock those who warn of dangerous human-driven climate change — this looks more like global cooling, they taunt.

Most climate scientists respond that the ferocious storms are consistent with forecasts that a heating planet will produce more frequent and more intense weather events. But some independent climate experts say the blizzards in the Northeast no more prove that the planet is cooling than the lack of snow in Vancouver or the downpours in Southern California prove that it is warming. Climate scientists say that no single episode of severe weather can be blamed for global climate trends while noting evidence that such events will probably become more frequent as global temperatures rise.

A federal report issued last year, intended to be the authoritative statement of known climate trends in the United States, pointed to the likelihood of more frequent snowstorms in the Northeast and less frequent snow in the South and Southeast as a result of long-term temperature and precipitation patterns.

In other words, if the government scientists are correct, look for more snow.

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