

# THE HINDU

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## **Bt brinjal moratorium stays, but time frame needs to be set**

NEW DELHI: The moratorium imposed on the commercial release of Bt brinjal stays, but “within a time frame” that would have to be determined.

This was decided at a meeting convened by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Wednesday to address the issues raised by Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar on the moratorium imposed by Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh earlier this month on the release of Bt brinjal. Union Ministers Kapil Sibal and Prithviraj Chavan were present.

Appealing to his warring colleagues to “speak with one voice” on the issue of biotechnology in food security and genetically modified (GM) crops including Bt brinjal, Dr. Singh appeared to back the moratorium decision but emphasised that the process could not be open-ended, adding a time frame would have to be set.

It was clarified that the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC), under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, would remain the body to address “concerns for resolving all scientific issues relating to Bt brinjal including safety aspects.”

### Create confidence

The meeting agreed that steps must be taken to create confidence amongst States about the role of biotechnology in food security, against the background of 10 States rejecting Bt brinjal.

A statement issued by the Prime Minister’s Office said: “It was agreed that biotechnology is an important option for higher agricultural productivity and ensuring food security. At the same time, we must ensure that it has no adverse effects on human and animal health and bio-diversity.

“Keeping this in mind, the government will soon be moving forward in setting up a National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority which will inspire confidence and stimulate public and private investment in biotechnology.”

Sources said Mr. Ramesh wanted the Authority set up under his Ministry and not under the Ministry of Science and Technology, as had been proposed.

There was also concern about the control of seeds and the lack of investment in the public sector for research in biotechnology.

But for rice, all GM foods for which the GEAC had given approval for trials did not directly affect food security as was being made out. The crops approved by the GEAC for field trials include cauliflower, tomato, groundnut, cabbage, potato, corn, sorghum, lady's finger and brinjal.

Earlier this month, Mr. Pawar wrote to the Prime Minister saying the moratorium declared by Mr. Ramesh on the GEAC's recommendation for commercialisation of Bt brinjal had "confused" the scientific community and the private sector about the status of biotechnology in food security and about the deciding authority.

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### **Sugar export to EU withdrawn**

NEW DELHI: Coming under attack for rising food prices and indulging export of sugar at a time when the country was faced with shortage and sky rocketing prices, the UPA II Government has cancelled its export order of 10,000 tonnes of white sugar to the European Union (EU).

The Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), which comes under the Commerce Ministry, in a notification said "allocation of 10,000 tonnes of white sugar for export to the European Union for 2009-10 stands withdrawn." The U-turn comes a week after the Commerce Ministry had allowed the export. The withdrawal of the export order comes close on the heels of the price rise issue rocking Parliament and the Opposition accusing the government of exporting sugar at a time when the country was faced with a severe shortage and the prices had almost doubled since January 2009. At present, sugar is selling at Rs. 43-45 a kg in Delhi even after the government took a host of measures like duty free imports to check prices. The Food and Public Distribution Ministry, headed by Sharad Pawar, had come under fire for allowing the export of sugar.

However, the Ministry had come out with a clarification that the decision on such export was taken by the Commerce Ministry. The Ministry had also stated that the EU has been providing a concessional sugar market for several years up to a specified quota and it needed to be protected. "By not discharging/availing of this quota, India may lead the EU to reduce quantities of the import quota from India which may not be in the country's interest," it said in a statement.

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This Day That Age **dated February 25, 1960: Indian scientist honoured**

An Indian scientist in British Columbia and a Federal Justice Department official have won the 1959 gold medals of the Professional Institute of the Civil Service for outstanding public service, the Institute announced in Ottawa on February 23. They are Dr. Har Gobind Khorana, Head of the Division of Organic Chemistry at the B. C. Research Council in Vancouver and Mr. E. A. Dreidger, Assistant Deputy Minister of Justice in Ottawa. Dr. Khorana, a graduate of Punjab University, was honoured for producing the synthetic equivalent of coenzyme, a vital part of the cell material in living things. The announcement described this as "one more step towards the discovery of the secret of life."

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### **Mango orchard**

**I am planning to start a mango orchard in about 3 acres in my native lands near Anbil in Tamil Nadu. Can you kindly guide me to some good mango farmers nearby whom I can approach for guidance and help?**

Chennai

You can contact Mr. R. Kulandaisamy, a progressive farmer in Thanjavur, for your details. Mr. Kulandaisamy has specialized in grafting some mango varieties in poly bags for 2 years, after which the seedlings can be planted in the main field. According to the farmer commercial harvest can be done from the third year of planting in the main field and by this technique the harvesting time comes down by 2 years compared to regular planting methods.

For more details you can contact Mr. R. Kulandaisamy,  
email: [tari\\_hitech@yahoo.com](mailto:tari_hitech@yahoo.com), website: [www.tarigroup.com](http://www.tarigroup.com),  
mobile: 98430-59117 and 98434-39909.

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## Corals are resilient despite global warming



Symbiotic relationship with algae has enabled a diversity of corals in the warm Indian ocean and they are resilient to climate change giving hope that they may persist in the face of future global warming suggests new research.

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## Cleaner, cheap ethanol fuel from orange peels



In a new way plant-derived enzyme cocktails are used to break down orange peels and other waste materials into sugar, which is then fermented into ethanol, turning discarded fruit peels into cheap, clean fuel.

## Control of slugs and snails in gardens

Slugs and snails with their rasping tongue cause damage by making irregular holes on leaves, flowers and fruits. They also trample young plants in the nursery. Their excrement leaves cabbage, green leaf vegetables and fruits unfit for consumption.

### Nocturnal

They prefer moist and damp habitats. They are nocturnal and active during cloudy and rainy season. They are bisexual and lay around 100 eggs in the soil.

Young ones hatch after 2 weeks and take 5-9 months to mature. Adults live for 3-4 years and undergo dormancy during severe winter and summer.

They are often found to climb on papaya and banana plants and cling on surface of leaves. They retreat into their shell by closing with a mucous membrane called mantle. Slugs form a slimy trail composed of a sticky, viscid secretion given off from the body as they move along. Snails are less troublesome than slugs to the gardeners.

### Management practices

Adult slugs and snails may be hand picked and destroyed. Open up the crop vegetation so that the sun light can reach the soil to drive away the hiding individuals. Hiding places can be searched during off-season and snails collected and destroyed.

Dissected pieces of papaya stems may be placed for attracting snails and trapping them. Sprinkle powdered lime around the plant as a deterrent.

Spread common salt in a band around the garden plots. Interplanting of marigold acts as trap crop for snails and slugs.

Rice bran baited with Metaldehyde at 5 per cent or Paris green at 3 per cent is found to be very effective.

Spraying of 1 per cent copper sulphate and broadcasting of 2 per cent metaldehyde pellets gives immediate control of the molluscs.

Application of insecticides such as lindane at 20kg/ha, carbaryl 0.5 per or fenitrothion at 1ml/litre of water is also effective.

Dr. J. Jayaraj & Dr. M. Anathan

Horticultural Research Station, Thadiyankudisai Dindigul District Tami Nadu

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### **Need for more research in biotechnology highlighted**



*The sector offers tremendous opportunities for growth'*

**S.L. Govindwar, Advisor, Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, speaking after inaugurating the conference on Computational Biotechnology and Nanotechnology at Vivekanandha College of Engineering for Women in Tiruchengode on Wednesday. —**

TIRUCHENGODE: The younger generation should come forward to take up more research in biotechnology to bring in solutions for various issues faced by the society and the industry, Advisor for Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology, New Delhi, S.L. Govindwar has said.

He was speaking after inaugurating a conference on Computational Biotechnology and Nanotechnology organised by the Department of Biotechnology of Vivekanandha College of Engineering for Women here on Wednesday.

The biotechnology sector offers tremendous opportunities for growth as it contributes to the development of other major sectors such as agriculture, healthcare and environment, Mr. Govindwar said.

A number of institutions in the country are carrying out research in the field of biotechnology.

Indigenous technologies have been developed and brought in for public utilisation.

But the country still needs more research works which will help solve problems such as pollution and other environmental related issues, he said.

Mr. Govindwar wanted the younger generation to show more interest in taking up research works in biotechnology.

College Chairman M. Karunanithi presided over the conference.

Delegates from various institutions in the country and abroad are participating in the three-day conference.

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### **Tirupur to get one more farmers' market**

*Stalls will be allotted on first-come-first-served basis*

Tirupur: The district is all set to get one more Uzhavar Santhai (Farmers' Market) shortly and the facilities at the existing four Uzhavar Sandhais will be improved at about Rs. 15 lakh.

80 shops

Official sources told *The Hindu* that the new one planned would come up at Kangeyam with about 80 shops so as to provide fresh fruits and vegetables at prices lesser than the prevailing retail prices in the open market, to the consumers in that region. Setting up of the Uzhavar Santhai would help the farmers in Kangeyam and nearby localities to sell their produce directly to the consumers without them getting exploited by the middlemen.

"This Santhai will be transformed into a Technical Information Centre for the farmers in the area by giving them hands-on training in organic farming methodology, vermin composting demonstration and post harvest management techniques on the premises," sources said.

Stalls in the proposed Kangeyam Uzhavar Santhai would be allotted free-of-cost to the farmers on a 'first come first served' basis. No shop would be allotted permanently to any farmer.

#### Scales

Weighing scales would be given to farmers free.

Agriculture department sources said that to ensure comfort of both the sellers and the consumers, drinking water, toilet and canteen facilities would be established.

Besides, a mechanism would be put in place to collect and remove any rotten fruit or vegetable found in the lots.

Regarding infrastructure improvement planned at existing Uzhavar Santhais, the Deputy Director of Agriculture Marketing K. S. Subramanian said that as part of the package, additional building would be constructed at Tirupur South Uzhavar Santhai, flooring at Tirupur North Uzhavar Santhai would be re-laid and dilapidated roof at Udumalpet Santhai would be repaired.

Apart from this, maintenance works at Dharapuram Uzhavar Santhai would be carried out and new sets of electronic weighing machines to be supplied to the Tirupur South Santhai.

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#### Water level

MADURAI: Water level in the Periyar dam on Wednesday stood at 110.40 feet. Level in Vaigai dam, 37.89 feet.

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#### Concern over move to raise urea price

*Plea to protect pulses on over 2 lakh hectares from pests*





***Tell your problems:*** A. Annadurai, District Revenue Officer, presiding over a farmers' grievance day meeting in Nagapattinam on Wednesday.

NAGAPATTINAM: Farmers expressed concern over proposed hike in urea price at the grievance day meeting held here on Wednesday.

They wanted to know the channels and rivers that would be taken up for desilting by the Public Works Department as the State government had allotted over Rs.12 crore for the work.

A. Alexander, Kadaimadai Paasana Vivasayigal Sangam, sought steps to revive and relocate the uzhavar sandhai at Mayiladuthurai for its viable functioning.

He complained that some finance institutions were lending micro finance to farmers at an exorbitant rate of interest.

A. Annadurai, District Revenue Officer, noted down the names of such finance companies.

Demanding Rs.2,000 for a tonne of sugarcane as against the current support price of Rs.1,550, Mr. Alexander pointed out that sugar mills were offering a price of Rs.1,720 per tonne.

Another farmer said that leak in the underground drainage system posed the risk of polluting the Sathyavanan Channel and the groundwater. He said that illicit arrack was being sold in Vedaranyam area. To this, the DRO assured that quick action would be taken.

Sambandam, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said the State government should procure 'karthigai kizhangu,' a horticultural crop with medicinal value, which was under cultivation on about 500 acres in Vedaranyam.

Kaveri Danapalan, Cauvery Farmers Protection Association, deplored the high-level of pest attack on pulses. Over 2 lakh hectares was under pulses and the condition should be set right. Removal of ipomoeas should be taken up on a priority basis under National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Answering a query, A. Thanikachalam, lead bank manager, Indian Overseas Bank, said Rs.50 crore was available with the bank for disbursal of credit up to March 2010.

Vishwanathan, Senior Regional Manager, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation, R.V.Karunakaran, Joint Director, Agriculture, V.Thirunavukkarasu, District Forest Officer, S.Suryakala, Project Officer, Magalir Thittam, were present.

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### **Mettur level**

TIRUCHI: The level in the Mettur dam stood at 75.06 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 868 cusecs and the discharge, 1,800 cusecs.

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### **Go veg to save the globe?**



### **MAKE VEGETABLES A WAY OF LIFEIt's environment-friendly**

Can the food that we load our plates with actually affect climate? Surprisingly, the answer is "Yes". What this means is, it's time we did our bit to save the planet from global warming by simply going vegetarian!

Did you know that rearing livestock for food generates more greenhouse gases than all the fuel guzzling cars and trucks in the world put together? Consider this. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) estimates that direct emissions from meat production account for 18 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, responsible for global warming. Apparently, the livestock industry generates 37 per cent of the total methane (a gas which is 22 times more powerful than carbon-dioxide in warming the globe) in the air.

Besides this direct impact, much of the environmental damage that our planet is now reeling under can be attributed to the livestock industry. The World Watch issue (July/August 2004) concludes: The human appetite for animal flesh

is a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage now threatening the future of the globe — deforestation, erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, destabilisation of communities and the spread of disease.

How does this happen? Explains P. Sudhakar, joint director, CPR Environment Education Centre, “Ruminant animals like cattle produce methane (a powerful global warming gas) during their digestive process. Also, these animals require vast quantities of fodder for their growth, which in turn depletes the land and water resources available in the world”. Besides, meat eating indirectly degrades the environment, because forests are destroyed for cattle ranching. “As of 2004, nearly three million acres of Amazonian rainforests have been converted into soy farms to feed chicken and other animals meant for Western markets,” Sudhakar informs. The Indian situation is more pathetic, considering that no such survey has been attempted so far. Further, more fossil fuel is consumed to produce and transport animal-based foods. “Meanwhile, 15 of the world's 17 major ocean fisheries are either depleted or overexploited, which in turn jeopardises the oceanic ecosystems,” points out environmental consultant, K. Rangaswamy.

According to the American Dietetic Association, ‘a vegetarian diet can provide all the nutrients required by man, besides actively promoting health. Fruits, vegetables, greens, grains, nuts, seeds, legumes and lentils can make a healthy meal, the ADA states. And it is a myth that only meat eaters develop strength and stamina. Vegans include legions of greats in every field from scientists and statesmen to athletes — Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Alva Edison, Viswanathan Anand, Olympic swimmer Murray Rose, and tennis ace Peter Burwash to name a few. Then, of course, it is a medical fact that a vegan diet cuts the risk of heart disease, blood pressure, osteoporosis, obesity, constipation and even cancer (especially cancers of the breast, prostate and colon).

But forget the ethics and the health benefits of going veg. Leave out the meat from your plate, just so that we pass on a liveable planet to our kids.

## **WARNING BELL**

Rearing livestock for food generates more greenhouse gases than all the fuel guzzling cars and trucks in the world put together.

The livestock industry is a prime reason for environmental damage. Drain on water resources: 3,900 litres of water are required to produce one kg of chicken while 900 litres are sufficient for one kg of grain.

More fossil fuel is exhausted to produce and transport animal-based foods. Marine fish resources are either getting depleted or are overexploited, which poses a threaten to the oceanic ecosystem.

## Jairam says he's lonely at the top

Feb 25 2010

New Delhi, Feb. 24: An escalation in the Bt brinjal controversy forced the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, to rein in some of his erring colleagues and warn them to speak in one voice on the crucial issue of biotechnology, which was required to increase agricultural productivity and ensure food security.

The meeting, attended by Union ministers Mr Sharad Pawar, Mr Kapil Sibal, Mr Jairam Ramesh and Mr Prithviraj Chavan, saw agreement on the need to set up a National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority which will inspire confidence and stimulate public and private investment in biotechnology. The bill will seek to regulate the research and import of all bio-technology products.

Dr Manmohan Singh's tacit support of Mr Ramesh in the meeting could be a reflection of the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi's support of the the environment minister's stand. He had earlier said that although he was fighting a "lonely" battle, he enjoyed the support of both Dr Singh and "the Congress high command".

Source URL:<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/national/jairam-says-he%E2%80%99s-lonely-top-251>



## On GM food, Govt begins its Jairam damage control

Thursday , Feb 25, 2010 at 0827 hrs

**New Delhi :** Pushed to a corner by Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh's preemptory freeze on Bt brinjal, the UPA government took the first step of finding a way out. And it needed the authority of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to do that.

In a clear enunciation of the government's policy on GM crops — a policy that got clouded by Ramesh's rhetoric —

the Prime Minister underlined the importance of biotechnology in productivity and food security, called for private investment in biotech, a time-frame for a decision on Bt brinjal and a national biotechnology regulatory authority.

These significant shifts from Ramesh's stand came in a statement after the Prime Minister's meeting this evening with Ramesh, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, Science and Technology Minister Prithviraj Chavan and HRD Minister Kapil Sibal.

Significantly, all three — Pawar, Chavan and Sibal — had called for a more nuanced, science-based approach to the issue. Pawar, in fact, sent a letter to the Prime Minister suggesting that the ad hoc freeze on Bt Brinjal would set the clock back and demoralise Indian scientists.

A senior government functionary described today's outcome as an "honourable draw" for Ramesh.

At the meeting, it was decided that all steps be taken to ensure that Bt brinjal has no "adverse effects on human and animal health and biodiversity." The PM, however, also favoured a clear time-frame to decide the fate of Bt brinjal as against an indefinite moratorium announced by Ramesh.

He also restored the primacy of the Genetic Engineering Approval Committee (GEAC). This was the body whose powers Ramesh intended to dilute.

While Ramesh wanted the GEAC to take the opinion of civil society groups on deciding on Bt brinjal, a statement from the Prime Minister's Office following the meeting said that the GEAC would resolve "all scientific issues relating to Bt brinjal."

Ramesh had asserted that biotechnology research in agriculture should primarily be driven by publicly funded institutions but today's statement underlined the need to "stimulate public and private investment in biotechnology".

In this context, the meeting also resolved to expedite the process of establishing a National Biotechnology Regulatory Authority (NBRA), an independent regulator that will be responsible for managing all biotechnology related products in India, both in the agricultural as well as pharmaceutical sectors.

As reported by this paper earlier, a draft bill for setting up NBRA is likely to be introduced in the current session of Parliament.

Unlike the GEAC, the NBRA, in the proposed draft bill, is not designed to function under the Ministry of Environment and Forests. In fact, Sibal was invited to the meeting mainly because he, as the Science and Technology Minister in the previous UPA government, had been instrumental in drafting the NBRA bill.

In today's meeting, Pawar is learnt to have said that Ramesh's decision had adversely affected the morale of the scientists who had been toiling in agricultural biotechnology sector for a number of years.

The Prime Minister asked his ministers not to air their differences in public and take a common position on important public issues.

The shift in the government's position, as enunciated in the statement, followed a similar shift in the line taken by the ruling Congress earlier in the day. The party, which had staunchly backed Ramesh's decision earlier, today said it was not opposed to Bt brinjal "or for that matter any scientific research for GM food crops".

Before meeting his ministers, the Prime Minister had a telephonic conversation with agricultural scientist M S Swaminathan and other scientists to get their opinion on this issue.

**PTI adds:** Earlier today, speaking to women journalists, Ramesh said he felt he was fighting a "lonely" battle. "I have no friends," he said, "only the Prime Minister supports me in the Cabinet."

Asked who were his friends, Ramesh said he had zero friends. I have no friends, only the Prime Minister supports me in the Cabinet.

At times I feel I am fighting a lonely battle. The odds are so stacked up against anybody saying or doing the right and rational thing as far as environment and forests are concerned, he said.

Ramesh added that nobody in politics, except the UPA chairperson, is willing to take a stand on issues relating to environment and forests. We have to take a stand. We cannot dilly-dally. On Bt brinjal, I could have also not taken a decision, he said.

