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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/04/stories/2010060454080500.htm>

Training in bee keeping

COIMBATORE: A training in bee keeping will be held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University on June 7.

Those interested can register at the earliest by phone or e-mail. A fee of Rs. 150 will be collected.

For details, contact Head, Department of Agricultural Entomology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003; phone: 0422-6611214. E-mail: entomology@tnau.ac.in.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/04/stories/2010060456461800.htm>

Food inflation creeps up to 16.55%

NEW DELHI: Food inflation inched up a tad to 16.55 per cent for the week ended May 22 from 16.23 per cent in the previous week, mainly owing to higher prices of pulses, milk, fruits and vegetables although potatoes and onions turned cheaper and wheat prices eased.

Evidently, despite the official projection of normal monsoon rains this year spread throughout the country, a softening trend in prices is yet to set in. Economic

analysts are of the view that with the onset of the monsoon, prices of edibles would start easing from July onwards and decline further during August-September.

During the week, the upward inflationary movement was primarily on account of a rise in prices of fish (marine) by seven per cent, poultry chicken by five per cent, masur (among pulses) and barley by two per cent each. Alongside, while wheat prices eased by one per cent, coffee was cheaper by five per cent.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/04/stories/2010060459920300.htm>

Delay in water release for irrigation

Situation may become worse if there is further delay in rainfall

FILE PHOTO



alas: A scenic view of Mullaperiyar dam on Western Ghats near Tamil Nadu border.

THENI: Despite onset of south west monsoon in time, poor storage in Periyar dam and sporadic or no rain in its catchment areas may delay the release of water from the dam for irrigation of first crop in the double cropping area of Cumbum Valley.

Farmers were perplexed over storage level in the dam. Water level stood at 110.20 feet in Periyar dam. Inflow and discharge was just 20 cusecs. (Release is possible only when the level touched 112 feet.)

Normally, Public Works Department engineers release water from the dam for irrigation on June 1. But farming activities and raising nurseries start in the last week of May to do transplantation in the second week of June. Farmers utilise seepage water from the dam to raise nurseries. It takes minimum 45 days to raise nurseries using traditional method.

But these things did not take place in the valley this year.

Possibility of releasing water even in the second week of June for irrigation was solely depending on rain in its catchment areas, said farmers. But poor rain in catchment areas of Periyar dam shattered our hopes. Delay in release would affect all agriculture activities, hit harvesting of first crop and ultimately force us to postpone the second crop, they deplored.

“Farmers in the valley harvest two paddy crops in September or October and January or February and the third crop either pulses or millets, before April. We hope the rain will pick up at right time,” said K.M. Abbas, president, Five District Farmers Associations.

Level in Vaigai dam too was not encouraging. Water level stood at 29.23 feet. Inflow was nil and the discharge was 41 cusecs.

Water crisis

Already, Cumbum town, very close to the dam, have been reeling under acute drinking water crisis. The Cumbum Municipality was struggling to maintain drinking water supply. At present, supply was made to residents once in 20 days. Besides, 40 wells were dug to meet drinking water needs of village and town panchayats.

Despite stern actions taken by the district administration against illegal pumping from river, drinking water supply could not be streamlined in several areas.

Releasing water from the dam for irrigation without streamlining drinking water supply was very remote, said representatives of farmers' association. However,

sudden showers in Idukki district on Thursday evening and moderate rain in Goodalur and Cumbum Valley last night keep farmers' hope alive.

Rainfall recorded at various places in the district at 8 a.m. on Thursday (in mm) was: Periyar 23, Shanmuga River Dam 8, Veerapandi 6, Thekkadi 1.8, Palayam 12 and Vaigai dam 1.

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/06/04/stories/2010060462340200.htm>

Saplings distributed at farmers' market

MADURAI: Tree saplings were distributed to visitors to the farmers' market at Anna Nagar on Thursday on behalf of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural Marketing Board to mark the 87 {+t} {+h} birthday celebration of Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. Tree saplings were also planted on the premises of the farmers' market.

According to an official press release issued here, office-bearers and members of the board participated in the distribution.

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Plan to usher in corporate farming

"The foundation will focus on the unused lands available with the landholders"

MADURAI: In an effort to improve the productivity of land and to face and overcome the challenges in the agriculture sector, a private organisation, 'Grow by Green Foundation,' has come forward to introduce and engage in corporate

farming.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, S. Dheenadhayalan, chairman of the foundation, said that the primary idea behind the initiative was to prevent the dwindle in the number of people engaged in agriculture by practising efficient ways to increase productivity and profit utilising barren lands abandoned by landowners.

“The foundation will focus on the unused lands available with the landholders by having a mutual consent and help them reap benefits out of new business models. The first phase of the plan is to practice such farming in Sivaganga district with judicious use of water resources. Bamboo saplings, which help in the production of oxygen will be given to the landholders,” he said. Other members of the foundation were also present at the meeting.

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By Reuters

03 Jun 2010 01:07:12 PM IST

Food price index rises 16.55%, up from last week

NEW DELHI: India's food price index rose 16.55 percent in the year to May 22, while the fuel price index climbed 14.14 percent, government data released on Thursday showed.

The pace of increase in food prices accelerated from the previous week's annual rise of 16.23 percent, while fuel price inflation quickened from the previous week's 12.08 percent.

The primary articles index was up 16.89 percent, compared with the previous week's annual reading of 15.90 percent.

Wholesale prices, the most closely watched inflation gauge in India, rose 9.59

percent in April from a year earlier.

Rice tech expo on June 5

By Express News Service

03 Jun 2010 05:21:05 AM IST

BHUBANESWAR: Rice Tech 2010, a three-day event, would bring together a host of agri-researchers, technology providers, rice industry captains and farmers to the City on June 5.

This edition of the expo would be the 11th international exhibition on rice processing technology and give an opportunity to the stakeholders to reach out to the buyers, sellers, knowhow provers and machinery marketing agencies.

Besides participants from India, representatives from China, Korea and Taiwan are also expected.

This issue of the exhibition will focus on processing technology, commercial developments in milling, machinery and equipment. In fact, the Tanjavur-based Indian Crop Processing Technologies, under Ministry of Food Processing Industries, has joined hands with Shiny Trade Expositions, Hyderabad to host this year's exhibition.

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Business Standard

Friday, Jun 04, 2010

High domestic prices force millers to import wheat

Ajay Modi / New Delhi June 04, 2010, 0:54 IST



A sudden spurt in wheat prices has prompted flour millers in southern states to go for imported Australian wheat through trading agencies. Since May, these flour millers are estimated to have placed orders for around 12,000 tonnes imported wheat.

Over the past three weeks, wheat prices in Delhi have jumped by over 8 per cent or Rs 100 to Rs 1,260 a quintal. This, even as the procurement season has not ended.

“We were getting Uttar Pradesh wheat delivered at Bangalore at a price of Rs 1,250 a quintal about a month ago. This has now increased to Rs 1,400. Similarly, wheat from Madhya Pradesh was available at Rs 1,450. But this has increased to Rs 1,600,” said M K Dattaraj of Bangalore-based Krishna Flour Mills. Dattaraj has bought some Australian wheat through a trading agency.

He said the Australian premium wheat (that is suitable for bakery products) is available at Chennai port for Rs 1,550 a quintal. While similar quality MP wheat is available at a price of around Rs 1,600 a quintal. “In 2009-10, the country is estimated to have imported close to 200,000 tonnes of wheat. In the current year, import has just started to pick up and it will continue,” he said.

“This price movement is not justified. We had two consecutive years of record

wheat production and the government has procured large quantities. We have adequate stocks. The industry did not procure much because it was expecting the government to release stocks in open market sale in the view of storage capacity shortage,” said Veena Sharma, general secretary, Roller Flour Millers Federation.

In 2008-09, the country produced 80.58 million tonnes of wheat, which rose marginally to 80.98 million tonnes in 2009-10. Last year, the government agencies procured a record 25.40 million tonnes of wheat. Procurement, so far, in the current year has been 22.41 million tonnes. As of May 1, the government pool had wheat stock of 33.71 million tonnes, sufficient to meet two years of requirement for public distribution system. However, the government is not keen to offload any quantity in open market for bulk consumers like flour millers.

Flour millers of southern states rely on northern states like Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and central states like Madhya Pradesh. However, prices in all these states have increased since mid-May. Wheat prices have risen about 10 per cent at Hardoi, a trading centre in UP. The state has seen significant interest from private buyers as well.

Decision on sugar import duty in a week: Pawar

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi June 4, 2010, 0:56 IST



The government may take a decision on imposing import duty on sugar within a week.

“It is in the process. We may decide in a week or so,” Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said when asked whether the government was considering import duty on sugar.

The industry has been demanding import duty on refined sugar as the prices of the sweetener have fallen in the domestic market by about 30 per cent in the last four months. Sugar prices, which were nearly Rs 50 a kg in mid-January, have declined to Rs 32-33 a kg now in the national capital.

Presently, duty-free import of both white and raw sugar has been allowed till December 2010. India, the world's second largest producer and the largest consumer, has imported over six million tonnes of sugar since February 2009—when import was allowed—to augment domestic supply and curb price rise.

Last month, Pawar said the government would consider imposing import duty on sugar after assessing the production scenario of the ongoing 2009-10 crop year (October-September) and outlook for the next crop year.

India's sugar production is expected to increase to 18.5 million tonnes in the ongoing crop year from 14.7 million tonnes last year. Initial estimate was that the country would produce 16 million tonnes in the current crop year.

Asked when the government would announce support price of kharif crops as sowing had begun, Pawar said the minimum support price (MSP) would be announced in the next 7-10 days.

He declined to share the proposed increase in MSP but said "it will be positive for farmers". About monsoons, Pawar said rains had just started and it was yet to be seen how it would be distributed across the country.

Asked about the proposed increase in rates at which the Centre buys levy sugar (meant for ration shops) from mills, he said the food ministry had sent the proposal to the finance ministry in this regard.

The average price of levy sugar currently is Rs 13.22 a kg, while the central issue price of levy sugar is Rs 13.50 a kg.

Global food output to rise to record high: FAO

Reuters / Milan June 04, 2010, 0:03 IST

World cereal output is expected to rise this year to near-record highs, swelling overall supplies and putting pressure on already weakened prices, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) said on Thursday.

The global wheat output is expected to fall for the third consecutive year, but at 676.5 million tonnes, it would still be close to record levels, the UN's food agency said, revising its earlier forecast for 2010.

Overall cereal output is expected to rise 1.2 per cent to 2.280 billion tonnes on the back of a 1.4 per cent gain in coarse grain output, FAO said in its Food Outlook.

A 0.9 per cent fall in wheat output this year was expected to be almost entirely offset by larger opening stocks, but stocks were expected to drop one per cent to 194 million tonnes at the end of the season in 2011, the agency said.

"Against the backdrop of an economic slowdown in many countries, this generally favourable wheat supply outlook is likely to maintain downward pressure on international prices," FAO said in its report.

Competition between major producers is seen heating up as all are expected to have large supplies, but European exporters may benefit from a weaker euro against the US dollar, the Rome-based agency said.

However, a large surplus in the Black Sea region was likely to put a lid on a surge in EU exports, it said.

Maize output is expected to rise to 835 million tonnes from 815 million tonnes with record crops likely in the US, the world's biggest producer and exporter. Maize prices are expected to come under more pressure from brimming supplies of alternative feed, including wheat, meals and distilled grains.

Global sugar output was expected to rise 3.5 per cent to 156.3 million tonnes in the 2009-10 marketing year, the report said, but forecasted a deficit of 6.3 million tonnes.

Early estimates for 2010-11 show that sugar output is likely to rise sharply due to higher sugarcane plantings as farmers benefit from higher prices and lower fertiliser costs. That could lead to a small surplus for the first time since 2007-08.

Staples' prices fall

World prices of key food staples have dropped in the first five months of 2010 driven by falls in sugar and cereals. FAO's Food Price Index fell to 164 points in May from 174 points in January, off its 214-point peak in 2008 spring.

"From sugar to wheat, most indicators point to increasing world supplies, a leading factor behind the sharp declines in international prices of major food staples this year," FAO said.

Oilseed prices, which have resisted a big downturn, may fall in coming months as supply increases, it said.

In another sign that prices could ease in the next few months, dry bulk freight rates for large ships, which carry commodities including grains around the world, were likely to weaken later this year as new vessels enter the market, the International Grains Council said on Thursday.

FAO also said that implied volatility—market's expectations of the future price moves of a commodity, inferred from the prices of derivative contracts—for wheat, maize and soybeans may have stabilised.

"Implied volatility has undergone a gradual moderation in the past 12 months, suggesting that markets are a little more assured than they were last year," FAO said.

Dairy markets remained firm with robust demand and sluggish milk output growth. Meat sector prices had been rising due to falling production and increased demand and fish prices were strong thanks to growing demand and limited supplies, it said.

The global cost of imported foodstuff was set to rise 11 per cent to \$921 billion this year on the back of a projected 17 per cent jump in non-cereal products which accounted for about two-thirds of global food import spending, FAO said.

Starch rises on firm maize prices

Kalpesh Damor / Ahmedabad June 4, 2010, 0:02 IST



The over 10 per cent rise in maize prices in the domestic market has increased starch prices by Rs 50 per 50 kg in the last two weeks. Maize is a key raw material for manufacturing starch.

“Starch prices have increased to Rs 950 per 50 kg from Rs 900 within a fortnight,” said Vishal Majithia, managing director of Mumbai-based Sahyadri Starch.

According to industry players, the season for maize procurement is over and the new crop will be sown only after the arrival of monsoon in the country. However, there is good demand for maize in local markets as the 2009-10 crop yield was lower than the previous year.

Lower output

Maize is grown in both kharif and rabi seasons. According to data provided by industry players, kharif maize output is estimated at 12.5 million tonnes for 2009-10 as compared to 14 million tonnes in the previous year.

The rabi season output is estimated at 4.68 million tonnes as against 5.60 million tonnes in the previous year. Overall, maize production in 2009-10 is likely to be 17.28

per cent lower, or 3.41 million tonnes less, at 16.32 million tonnes, from 19.73 million tonnes in 2008-09.

“The maize season has come to an end and new crop arrivals have dried up. This has increased prices around seven per cent,” said Gautam Chowdhary, managing director, Santosh Starch Ltd. In Maharashtra, the crop’s price has risen by Rs 100 a quintal to Rs 1,000-1,050, while in Gujarat, the rate is Rs 1,030-1,035 a quintal.

Moreover, sowing for the ensuing kharif season will start only after the arrival of monsoon in the country. “A clear picture regarding maize acreage and production will emerge only after June,” said a trader.

In this backdrop, marketmen see a further rise in starch prices. “Further increase is likely, say by another Rs 50 per 50 kg,” Majithia said.

However, there are others who believe the price rise will be limited to Rs 10-20 per 50 kg, as many industrial maize consumers like starch producers already have the required stocks.

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Fertiliser industry seeks sops on sulphate of potash

Will help diversify options from muriate of potash.

SoP is more expensive. Its landed cost of around \$550 a tonne (cost & freight Indian ports) compares with \$370 for MoP.



Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, June 3

Fertiliser firms are seeking subsidy on Sulphate of Potash (SoP). Currently, potassium chloride – better known as Muriate of Potash (MoP) – is the only potassic fertiliser covered under the Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) system.

“The new regime's ultimate objective is to provide subsidy not on the products per se as much as on their nutrient composition and content. There is, therefore, no rationale for subsidising MoP, but not SoP,” industry sources pointed out.

Content

SoP has only 50 per cent potassium (K) content, as against MoP's 60 per cent. But MoP, being a chloride mineral has toxic effects, on crops such as tobacco, potato, chilli, pepper and many fruits (mango, banana, apple, citrus, grapes) and vegetables (beans, onion, tomato, carrot).

In all these chloride-sensitive plants, MoP application is either not desirable or recommended only in the early pre-vegetative growth stages. Excessive chloride uptake is said to lead to yield losses as well as reduced protein and starch content. MoP is also saline, making it inappropriate for salty soils.

“SoP does not cause any chloride toxicity and has very low salinity index. Moreover, it has 18 per cent sulphur (S) content, which is very important for Indian soils that are highly deficient in this nutrient. So, in many ways, it is superior to MoP,” the sources claimed.

No indigenous deposit

But SoP is more expensive. Its landed cost of around \$550 a tonne (cost & freight Indian ports) compares to \$370 for MoP. And the absence of any subsidy makes it unviable for companies to import.

India has no indigenous potash deposits and imports its entire potassic requirements – the bulk of it in the form of MoP from Belarus, Russia, Canada, Israel, Jordan and Germany. During 2009-10, the country imported nearly 5.3 million tonnes of MoP, against hardly 30,000 tonnes of SoP, mainly from Germany.

Under the NBS, the Centre is providing a fixed per kg subsidy of Rs 23.227 on nitrogen (N), Rs 26.276 on phosphorous (P), Rs 24.487 on K and Rs 1.784 on S. But the nutrient-linked payments are available only for 18 non-urea fertiliser products.

They include MoP, di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), mono-ammonium phosphate (MAP), triple super phosphate (TSP), single super phosphate (SSP), ammonium sulphate and 12 complexes with different NPKS ratios (16:20:0:13, 20:20:0:13, 23:23:0:0, 10:26:26:0, 12:32:16:0, 14:28:14:0, 14:35:14:0, 15:15:15:0, 20:20:0:0, 28:28:0:0, 17:17:17:0 and 19:19:19:0).

CHOICE

“When it comes to P, farmers have the choice between DAP, SSP, TSP and MAP, all of which are under the NBS. But in the case of K, the only saleable fertiliser is MoP. There is no reason for not widening the choice to include SoP or other potassic fertilisers,” the sources noted.

The subsidy on MoP (at Rs 24.487 for 600 kg of P) is now Rs 14,692 a tonne. If the NBS is extended to SoP (50 per cent K and 18 per cent S), the corresponding subsidy would work out to 12,565 a tonne.

“Even after subsidy, MoP will still work out much cheaper. But it will at least make SoP more affordable for use in crops, where MoP may not be particularly effective. Further, to the extent it reduces MoP demand and dependence on a single source of K, it might even bring down prices of imported MoP,” the sources added.

The Centre intends, over time, to expand the basket of fertiliser products covered under the NBS to include customised formulations specific to particular crops, geographies and even growth stages. But more immediately, it is learnt to be giving the go-ahead for two more complexes, namely 24:24:0:0 and 16:16:16:0.

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Food inflation rises 16.55% on costlier fish, chicken

Our Bureau, New Delhi, June 3

The annual food inflation, based on the Wholesale Price Index, rose 16.55 per cent in the year to May 22, up from previous week's annual rise of 16.23 per cent.

The fuel price index, too, surged to 14.14 per cent, higher than the previous week's 12.08 per cent, Government data released on Thursday showed.

In case of the Primary Articles group, the annual rate of inflation, calculated on point-to-point basis, stood at 16.89 per cent for the latest week compared with 15.90 per cent for the previous week and 6.03 per cent during the corresponding week of the previous year.

Coffee cools

According to the weekly data, the Primary Articles group was up 0.5 per cent on a sequential basis as the index for 'Food Articles' group increased 0.5 per cent due to higher prices of fish-marine (7 per cent), poultry chicken (5 per cent), barley and masur (2 per cent each) and condiments and spices, fish-inland, fruits and vegetables, bajra and jowar (1 per cent each).

However, the prices of coffee (5 per cent) and moong and wheat (1 per cent each) declined.

The index for 'Non-Food Articles' group rose by 0.4 per cent due to higher prices of raw rubber (5 per cent), raw silk and castor seed (4 per cent each), rape and mustard seed (3 per cent) and raw jute (1 per cent).

Logs, timber ease

However, the prices of logs and timber (2 per cent) and gingelly seed (one per cent) dropped.

The Fuel index gained 1.8 per cent on a sequential basis due to surge in the electricity sub-index (6 per cent).

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<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/06/04/stories/2010060451471900.htm>

Pepper futures fall on heavy liquidation

G.K. Nair, Kochi, June 3

Pepper futures continued to fall on bearish activities and consequent heavy liquidation and off-loading, probably by small and medium players.

Add to this was the rumours being spread in the market that India was going to sign a treaty with the Asean countries soon and that in turn will bring down the import duty from the current 70 per cent and this phenomenon also contributed to the fall.

The market witnessed high volatility and at one stage June went up to Rs 16,150 and then fell sharply and touched the first circuit breaker at Rs 15,350 a quintal. Then it recovered and ended below the previous close. June open interest fell by 1,906 tonnes to 8,006 tonnes while that of July increased by 1,011 tonnes indicating good switching over. July open interest moved up by 126 tonnes to 558 tonnes.

Off leading resulted in the total open interest dropping by 743 tonnes to 14,898 tonnes.

June contract fell by Rs 174 to close at Rs 15,640 a quintal. July and August dropped by Rs 198 and Rs 130, respectively, to close at Rs 15,852 and Rs 16,155 a quintal.

Total turnover increased by 4,597 tonnes to close at 20,825 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 743 tonnes to 14,898 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures market trend also dropped by Rs 200 to close at Rs 15,000 (ungarbled) and Rs15,500 (MG 1) a quintal.

There were no sellers for ready pepper and hence physical pepper was not available. Given the present situation, primary market dealers might buy from the exchange for selling to exporters, trading sources told Business Line.

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Lower dusts on offer at Coonoor tea auctions

P.S. Sundar, Coonoor, June 3

A volume of 4.48 lakh kg of dusts will be offered for sale no 22 of the Coonoor Tea Trade Association's (CTTA) auctions to be held tomorrow, reveals an analysis of the listing by brokers. This is some 1.08 lakh kg lower than the offer for the dust auctions last week.

In the 4.48-lakh kg, CTC accounts for the bulk with 4.07 lakh kg. Orthodox teas account for only 0.41 lakh kg. This, together with the 8.61-lakh leaf on offer, takes the total volume this week to 13.09 lakh kg – as much as 2.32 lakh kg less than last week and 2.14 lakh kg less than the offer this time last year. This is the lowest volume in the past 10 weeks.

Of the 13.09-lakh kg on offer, as much as 12.30 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only 0.79 lakh kg orthodox variety. In the leaf counter, only 0.38 lakh kg belongs to orthodox, while 8.23 lakh kg CTC.

Fresh tea

In the 13.09-lakh kg, fresh tea accounts for 10.66 lakh kg. As much as 2.43 lakh kg comprises teas remaining unsold in previous auctions. The fall in fresh tea is due to the commencement of separate manual auctions by Teaserve in lieu of the e-auctions which remain closed.

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Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Friday, Jun 4

Max Min
39.8° | 29.4°

Rain: Trace

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 75%

Sunset: 18:32

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1007.0

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Saturday, Jun 5

Max Min
38° | 29°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday Jun 6	Monday Jun 7	Tuesday Jun 8	Wednesday Jun 9	Thursday Jun 10
37° 29°	38° 30°	38° 29°	38° 30°	38° 28°
Tstorm	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy