

# THE HINDU

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<http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/26/stories/2010032652441003.htm>

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## Path of science

This has reference to the article, "The path of science for GM crops in India" (March 24). Thanks to The Hindu and the writer for giving complete scientific details of GM crops to the common man. As is evident from the article, there is no consensus on the commercial release of Bt brinjal even among the elite (let alone the common man who gets the details only from the media). The Genetic Engineering Approval Committee is the apex body which has a mandate to ensure extensive research, testing and safety of Living Modified Organisms (LMOs) prior to their large-scale and commercial release. To clear confusion, the committee should make public on what basis it approved the commercial release of Bt brinjal.

Sunil Kumar Darsi, Anantapur

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## Food inflation eases to 16.22%

*WPI inflation is set to breach the double-digit mark on account of high fuel prices*

NEW DELHI: Even as food inflation eased further marginally to 16.22 per cent for the week ended March 13 from 16.30 per cent in the previous week, the overall WPI (wholesale price index) inflation for the month is set to breach the double-digit mark on account of high fuel prices and the spill-over effect on non-food items.

During the week, although a fall in the prices of certain vegetables such as onions coupled with a slower pace of price rise in other edibles led to the eight basis points decline in food inflation, petrol prices went up by 16.82 per cent, while diesel was 14.99 per cent dearer on a year-on-year basis, following the hike in duties on petrol and diesel.

In the event, even as food inflation is expected to soften considerably over the next few months with the arrival of rabi crops, a spurt in manufacturing inflation is on the cards owing to the cascading effect of an across-the-board hike in excise duty from eight per cent to 10 per cent as part of roll-back of the stimulus measures. With Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee having admitted post-budget that a double-digit overall inflation would not come as a surprise to him, the government's prime concern now is to contain the price spiral through monetary and other measures.

The recent increase in key rates by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is a strong signal in that direction. On Friday last week, the apex bank raised the short-term lending and borrowing (repo and reverse repo) rates by 25 basis points each to 5 per cent and 3.5 per cent, respectively, as a measure to check inflation from spreading to non-food items. During the week, while onions were 6.64 per cent cheaper, the prices of potatoes went up by a mere 5.62 per cent on a yearly basis.

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## **Farmers' federation**

VELLORE: The Natrampalli Farmers' Federation, a block-level organisation comprising 3,000 farmers who are members of 160 farmers' groups, was inaugurated at a function in Natrampalli on Wednesday.

The function was organised by the Natrampalli Farmers' Coordination Committee and DHAN Foundation.

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## **SIMA concerned over increasing cotton prices**

COIMBATORE: The Southern India Mills' Association (SIMA) has expressed concern over the hike in cotton prices sold by the Cotton Corporation of India (CCI).

Association chairman J. Thulasidharan has said in a release that cotton prices remained above the minimum support price since the beginning of the season (October 2009). The market price of Shankar 6 was Rs. 3,600

a quintal as against the minimum support price of Rs. 2,850. Hence, the CCI had not taken up "MSP operations". It entered the market for regular cotton trading and the association had received complaints that the Corporation was not supplying even one-third of the agreed quantity of cotton to the buyers at a particular price. It had, instead increased the prices.

Mr. Thulasidharan said that on March 22, the CCI increased the price for Shankar 6 by Rs. 700 a candy. This had resulted in other cotton traders also increasing the prices.

The entire textile value chain was complaining of spiralling yarn prices though the spinning sector was unable to pass on the entire hike in cotton prices. He appealed to the CCI to avoid speculating on cotton prices so that the entire textile chain was able to sustain its competitiveness.

Mr. Thulasidharan pointed out that as on March 15 this year, the Office of the Textile Commissioner had registered 67.58 lakh bales of cotton for exports as against the Cotton Advisory Board's estimate of 55 lakh bales for 2009-2010. Already, 43.8 lakh bales had been shipped.

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## **Seminar on banana processing**

TIRUCHI: Sri Sankara Educational and Charitable Trust here in association with the Union Ministry of Food Processing Industries, New Delhi and the National Research Centre for Banana, (NRCB), Tiruchi, will organise a two-day national seminar on 'Banana processing and value addition' which commences in the city on Saturday. Addressing presspersons here on Thursday, B. Sivaramakrishnan, Chairman, Sri Sankara Educational and Charitable Trust, said that the sessions would focus on utilising the vast potential of banana cultivation in the Tiruchi region for an integrated development on the industrial front. Listing out various by-products being produced from banana, he said that several self-help groups have been formed with exclusive thrust on making by-products of banana. Further, the NRCB has a collection of more than 350 varieties of banana. Every potential of each group and institute would be fully tapped. The seminar would be a platform for the entrepreneurs, farmers, self-help groups to work out a strategy for getting higher returns from banana and its by-products. Industrialists, exporters and scientists would deliver lectures.

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## Vegetable mission set up

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A vegetable mission has been set up to coordinate and effectively implement schemes for increasing the production of fruits and vegetables. The Director (Research) of the KAU, Mission Director of the State Horticulture Mission, CEO of the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council, Keralam, MD of the State Horticultural Products Development Corporation, T.R. Gopalakrishnan of the KAU, Additional Director (Farms) and the Additional Director (Agricultural Marketing) are its members.

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## Ayurveda expo showcases new products

KOCHI: The Ayurveda product expo at the Global Ayurveda Summit 2010 is a revelation of the leaps and bounds that the Ayurveda products have made from their earlier forms. Packaged in attractive packs are various products by Ayurveda hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, research institutions, NGOs, spas and resorts, among others.

There are tablets and capsules of Ayurvedic medicines, which are easy to consume. The big names in Ayurveda, the Kottakkal Arya Vaidya Sala, Vaidyaratnam Oushadhasala, Oushadhi, the Ayurveda medicine maker under the government sector, have on display various products for diabetic patients, or those with higher cholesterol levels. Different grades of products are now available to suit the lifestyles of people.

Cough syrups, face packs and soaps are available in various packages — with every product vying for attention with its USP. Santhigiri Healthcare and Research Organisation, with packages of Ayurveda and Siddha medicines; Sreedhareeyam, with one of its latest products addressing the obesity problem, Nagarjuna with a range of products like hair oil, pain balm, thaleesapatradi tablets, thalipody, hair wash powder, digest drops, brahmi granules and more and Bipha Drug Laboratories, with over 45 therapeutic drugs available in easily consumable forms are just some of the participants among the 40-odd ones.

There are institutes like Sahyadri Ayurveda division, promoted by the Peerumade Development Society that has come up with aromatherapy to meet the challenges of Ayurvedic drugs in spas and wellness centres.

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## Vegetable prices touch new high as dry spell continues

*Pest attack destroying the meagre yields*



**Pricey Affair: The extended dry spell in the State has resulted in yields dwindling significantly.**

KOCHI: Increasing pest attacks and near drought-like conditions prevailing across the State have resulted in the increase in prices of summer season vegetables like cowpea, bitter gourd, cucumber, ash gourd and tuber crops by 50-130 per cent over last year's prices.

The extended dry spell in the State has resulted in yields dwindling significantly while attacks by sucker pests are destroying even the meagre yields, said scientists at Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCK).

VFPCK figures for the last three weeks show that price-rise has been as sharp as 40 to 55 per cent in some cases within March, painting a grim picture on the prices front for the dry month of April.

Price of ash gourd, a summer season favourite, went up from Rs.10 last week to Rs.14 on Wednesday. Price of bitter gourd has gone up from Rs.24 on March 8 to Rs.30 on Wednesday. Similarly, cowpea price went up from Rs.32 on March 8 to Rs.36 on Wednesday.

Tuber crop prices hold the biggest surprise as it registered some of the sharpest rises this week. For example, elephant foot yam price on Wednesday was Rs.30 a kg, up from the previous year's level (for the same week) of Rs.14 a kg.

The price of lady's finger has gone up from Rs.22 a kg on March 8 to Rs.30 on Wednesday. The price of beans too has shown sharp appreciation soaring to Rs.40 a kg on Wednesday from the early March level of Rs.35 a kg.

**Bleak outlook**

Market sources said that though the prices appeared to ease over the last two days, the short-term outlook is for higher prices as the season gets hotter and water scarcer.

Vegetable buyers in Ernakulam, who depend on major markets like Ottanchathram and Mettupalayam, have reported that yields are low in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh because of the dry weather conditions.

VFPCK price figures also indicate that though there may be some easing of prices in the wholesale market on a day-to-day basis, they are not reflected in the retail market.

Increasing attacks by sucker pests—epid, hoppers, white flies, thrips, mites and jassid, is also the result of the dry condition prevailing in the State for nearly six months now, said VFPCK sources.

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## **Programme on global warming**

PUDUKOTTAI: The Rotaract Club of Mookambigai College of Engineering conducted an awareness programme on 'global warming' recently. P. Subramanian, former Director of National Institute of Technology (NIT-T), in his key-note address explained the causes and effects of climate changes and the measures to be initiated to control the warming of earth. M. Sekar, Registrar and M. G. Venugopalan, Principal, A. Subramanian, chief executive of Mookambigai College of Engineering, offered felicitations. Dr. Subramanian gave away prizes to the winners of the painting competition conducted on the topic 'global warming.' V. Kingsley Jesus, president of the Rotaract Club, spoke.

## Pathaneer sales up by 15%

Mar 26 2010

March 25: Come summer and the sale of our very own energy drink neera (pathaneer) has once again skyrocketed. According to a senior official of the Tamil Nadu Palmgur and Fibre Marketing Co-operative Federation, sales have jumped by 15 per cent.

The spurt in sales is mainly due to better awareness among people about the nutrient-rich sap of the palm tree, he told this newspaper.

The federation supplies around 1,500 litres of neera every day to the market. The increased demand in Chennai is met with the help of members of primary societies in Kadpakkam, Kalpakkam, Muddaliyar Kuppam and Kappikam, said the official.

"In almost all cases, neera is collected every morning just at sunrise. The drink is extracted from both the male and female tree during the season from January to March and later in the year only from the female tree," said Mr N. Sampath, a neera tapper in Muddaliyar Kuppam.

Mr K. Rajesh, an employee of an IT firm in Guindy, said that there was a large misconception and lack of awareness about the drink. A small quantity of neera would provide the daily required nutrients he said, adding that not many people are involved in the extraction of Neera and the popularity of the drink would help those whose livelihoods depend on it.

The drink is rich in nutrients, as 500 ml of Neera contains 35 mg calcium, 44.4 mg Riboflavin, 11.6 mg Iron, 50 mg protein and 118 per cent calorie. It is rich with Vitamins B and C and contains acids like ascorbic acid and nicotinic acid. It is also Neera is rich in carbohydrates, mostly sucrose, and has a nearly neutral pH value. It has a specific gravity ranging from 1.058 to 1.077, he noted.

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**Source URL:**

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/chennai/pathaneer-sales-15-107>

# Food inflation eases, RBI not impressed yet

Mar 26 2010

March 25: Food inflation eased marginally to 16.22 per cent for the week ending on March 13.

This is the third straight week, when the food prices have fallen. However, RBI is still expected to further hike the interest rates in April as now the overall inflation is moving beyond food inflation.

"The overall inflation is likely to touch double-digits in March as we are now seeing that food inflation has spilled over to manufacturing sector. The government has also raised fuel prices. All these factors will push it over 10 per cent," said Mr Sunil Sinha, head, Crisil. He was of the view that the overall inflation is unlikely to touch the comfort level of five per cent in the next six months and is likely to remain at seven to eight per cent.

While good rabi crop and likely better monsoon will increase agriculture output, Mr Sinha says that food prices still may not be in the comfortable level. "The food prices will stabilise but there will not be any dramatic change in the food prices," he added.

The high inflation is likely to force RBI to take a hawkish view of interest rates. Last week, RBI suddenly raised the repo and the reverse repo rates by 25 basis points each.

Mr Sinha said that RBI hiked interest rates before the policy review next month as inflation had crossed its target of 8.5 per cent. "The recent increase in the interest rates by the RBI was just an indication. They will be more action in the April policy review," he adds. The data showed that as compared to last year the prices of cereals was up by 10.6 per cent, rice 7.4 per cent, wheat 15 per cent.

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## Centre enhances sugar quota for MP under PDS

The government will allocate 3,000 metric tonnes more sugar to the state from next month.

"We were getting 9,500 metric tonnes sugar monthly under the PDS and now we will get 3,000 metric tonnes more," Madhya Pradesh Food and Civil Supplies Corporation Managing Director K C Gupta said on Thursday.

He said the stock will be disbursed under the Public Distribution System at Rs 13.50 per kg.

Madhya Pradesh had been pressing the Centre to enhance the sugar quota to the state.

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buzz

*By J Santhosh*

*25 Mar 2010 03:15:00 AM IST*

## Whale's fat found floating in sea?

CUDDALORE: Fishermen here found 750 grams of what appeared to be Whale fat, floating on sea on Wednesday. Experts' value it at Rs 5 lakh a gram. So the total catch of 750 grams would be worth Rs 37.50 crore. But one has to wait for three days to see if it solidifies and hardens to confirm it as Amber Grise. If not then it would have no value.

Velu of Puthukuppam and others found it floating on the sea about 30 km offshore and brought it to the shore. They informed the Parengipettai Police station who passed on the information to Fisheries Department. Experts from Annamalai University's Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology were called to identify the material.

A small portion of the material was burnt and it gave away a type of effervescence which led the experts to suppose it as Amber Grise.

Centre of Advanced Study in Marine Biology's director told Express that a special type of fat get secreted in the whale's stomach after it gets injured by consuming fish spikes.

After the whale's death and decomposition of the caracas this fat emerges out and gets washed to the shore. This rare material could be used for industrial and medical purposes.

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## Oz wheat with high pesticide content seized at Chennai port

TNN, Mar 25, 2010, 12.57am IST

CHENNAI: Sea Customs has detained over 1,250 tonnes of wheat imported from Australia in 50 containers at Chennai port. The consignment was found to contain more than permissible levels of pesticide chloropyrifos.

Three clearing agents were arrested on charges of attempting to get clearance for the consignment using fake documents. The CBI is also investigating the background of the agents and the importer to find out why they were eager to obtain clearance for the consignment.

The wheat contained 0.7 mg per kg of the pesticide as against the permissible limit of 0.05 mg per kg. Customs commissioner C Rajan said, "This is the first time such a huge quantity of imported food grain has been found to have excessive pesticide content. The consignment will not be cleared for import. It will have to be sent back to Australia."

Customs officials took samples of the wheat as soon as the consignment arrived 10 days ago from Melbourne in Australia, and sent them to the Central Food Technology Research Institute, Mysore.

"It is the procedure. We take samples and send them to the laboratory for testing the pesticide content. The test revealed that the consignment contained high pesticide levels and hence was not fit for consumption," said Rajan. The consignment is kept locked in a private container terminal at Minjur.

Officials are perplexed about the reason for such high-level of pesticide in the wheat. "We wonder whether the chemical was used during agriculture or later to fumigate," an official said. Customs here have been seizing huge quantities of toys, fake cosmetics and electronic goods, but this is the first time food grains with high pesticide content are being seized.



## Food inflation slips to 16.22 pct

Reuters Posted online: Mar 25



**New Delhi** : The food price index rose 16.22 per cent in the 12 months to March 13, while the fuel index was up 12.68 per cent, government data showed on Thursday.

The rise in the food price index was lower than an annual rise of 16.30 per cent in the previous week.

The primary articles index was up 13.88 per cent year-on-year on March 13.

India's wholesale price inflation leapt to 9.89 per cent in February and Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee and other policymakers have said it could hit double digits in March.