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University takes technology to farmers

Amutha Kannan

— PHOTO: S. SIVA SARAVANAN

Simplifying things:Extension workers at the district Krishi Vigyan Kendras of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University holding a meeting through video conferencing.

COIMBATORE: The persistent grouse among the agricultural academia is the poor percolation of farm information to the grassroots. Lab-to-land transfer of latest agricultural technologies is inadequate.

Even with 52 State Agricultural Universities, more than 100 institutes of Indian Council of Agriculture Research and 572 Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) across the country, the flow of information to the farmer is very poor.

Realising the fact that bringing the farmer to the technology is a daunting task, the e-Extension Centre of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has taken the technology to the farmer, putting to optimum use Information and Communications Technology (ICT).

The State has 30 KVKs, out of which 14 come under TNAU. The University has a server linked multiple video conferencing system, established with financial support from National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP). This links the university with the 14 KVKs, 36 research stations and 10 colleges.

According to E. Vadivel, Project Officer, e-Extension Programmes of TNAU, it is possible to simultaneously link all the 60 centres for holding meetings, sharing power point presentations and also chatting on-line.

An agritech portal www.agritech.tnau.ac.in with nearly 50,000 html pages is also made available round-the-clock for any user.

However, the main function of the conferencing system is to enable face-to-face interaction among the stake-holders – scientists, KVK extension workers and farmers. For this, each centre of the university is provided a computer with Web cam. A server linked URL ID is created by each individual using the centre's name and identification name.

With the conferencing facility, the farmer can come to one of the 60 centres at his convenience, use the centre's log in and have interface with any other centre or the university itself or just get information from the portal.

The scheduled meeting timings are informed to farmers to enable them get connected. Even those who cannot attend it live can get to see the recorded version later.

“Hi-tech technologies in agriculture have started flowing in. Except a handful of enterprising farmers many remain ignorant about these. ICT intervention is very much needed to bridge this gap. Unfortunately, the agriculture sector has been the last to adopt this route," Mr. Vadivel says.

What is unique about the project is that the whole system has been devised by the agricultural scientists themselves.

The University is now planning to extend the conferencing facility to all block offices and also take the portal and conferencing facility to mobiles. The ultimate aim is to see that access is just a finger touch away for the farmer – a touch screen facility in every block office is the University's next step in the ICT ladder.

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Saplings distributed

Special Correspondent

Coimbatore: Rotaract Club of PSGCAS as part of the project "Ozone – A Small Leap But a Giant Difference" distributed free saplings to the public.

The message conveyed was that every individual is to take responsibility to create a green environment.

The project was inaugurated on December 14 by Mayor R. Venkatachalam at BPCL petroleum pump Ms. Jaishree Corporation and Ms. Ram Sons and Co. on Avanashi Road.

The distribution of saplings took place in the presence of V. Mohan Nair, Territory Manager (Retail) of Bharat Petroleum Corporation.

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TNAU asks farmers to sell potatoes

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) has said that though the prevailing price of potatoes was between Rs. 570 and Rs. 640 a bag (45 kg), it was expected to decline in February-March.

DEMIC analysed the price of potatoes that was prevalent in the Nilgiris Co-operative Marketing Society for the last 20 years before giving farmers the forecast.

With a phenomenal increase in potato production in the last 10 years, recurring gluts had become common in the country. The prices crashed drastically during the harvesting months that led to panic sale by farmers.

In Tamil Nadu, potato was cultivated in 4,800 hectares with a production of 80,600 tonnes in 2009-10 and was mostly grown in hilly regions of Dindigul, the Nilgiris, and Erode. The steady increase in price of hill potatoes encouraged the farmers to go in for its cultivation in 2010 Kharif season.

The current auction price at the Nilgiris Co-operative Marketing Society at Mettupalayam was between Rs. 680 and Rs. 730 a bag.

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Test seeds before sowing

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: The Seed Testing Laboratory, Coimbatore, has recommended that farmers get their seeds tested for physical purity, germination, moisture and other distinguishable varieties, before sowing.

According to a release from R. Jawahar, Seed Testing Officer (in-charge), a good quality seed should possess high percentage of physical purity and germination, maximum specified moisture content and lowest specified other distinguishable varieties.

The tests are carried out based on the rules prescribed by the International Seed Testing Association. Standards for parameters vary for each crop. The tests provide the requisite information necessary for labelling of seed bags or issuing of seed certification tags.

Farmers can avail themselves of this opportunity at the cost of Rs. 30 a seed sample.

Contact Seed Testing Laboratory, Department of Seed Certification, 1424 A, Thadagam Road, Coimbatore – 641013.

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Onion exports suspended to check price rise

Special Correspondent

Retail price of onions has surged to Rs. 60-70 a kg within a couple of days

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NOCs will not be issued to exporters till January 15

Minimum export price raised to $1,200 a tonne

— Photo: Sushil Kumar Verma

ONION, DEAR ONION:A labourer sorting and packing onions at the wholesale vegetable market at Azadpur Mandi in New Delhi on Monday.

NEW DELHI: The government on Monday announced suspension of onion exports till January 15 in a last-minute effort to cool prices of the poor man's essential vegetable from the prevailing high of Rs. 60-70 a kg.

In a twin strategy, while the farm cooperative major and regulating agency Nafed (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation) and 12 other agencies have been directed to halt issuance of export clearance, the MEP (minimum export price) for onions has also been raised more than double from $ 525 a tonne to $1,200 with immediate effect.

As a result, even those onion exporters who have already secured NOCs (no objection certificates) from the regulating agencies but have not executed their export orders will not be able to do so below the increased price. “We have decided to voluntarily suspend issuing NOC to onion exporters till January 15 and have also raised the MEP to US$ 1,200 per tonne for those NOCs which are yet to be executed,” a Nafed official said after the decision to suspend exports was taken at an emergency meeting here.

Within a couple of days, retail price of onions soared to Rs. 60-70 a kg across the country from an existing high of Rs. 35-40 a kg. While wholesalers have been attributing the earlier high prices to supply constraints owing to unseasonal rains in Maharashtra (especially Latur where the crop was impacted), Gujarat and southern States, the sudden surge in prices is owing to a sharp increase in exports, apart from various stakeholders holding back the produce from entering the market.

High production cost

This is evident from the fact that way back in May this year, Nasik-based National Horticulture Research and Development Foundation (NHRDF) Additional Director Satish Bhonde had gone on record saying that although the country's onion production this year was likely to touch a record 95 lakh tonnes, it may not result in a sharp fall in prices due to high investment costs involved.

In a clear indication that high yield would not mean lower prices, Mr. Bhonde had said: “Use of crop technology and irrigation have improved onion yields, though acreage remained at last year's level of 5.5 lakh hectare…The wholesale prices of onions are unlikely to fall significantly because farmers are storing the crop in a big way. Also, higher production cost may not allow them to sell at lower rates.”

According to NHRDF data, wholesale price in late May for onions were at Rs. 6-7 a kg at Lasalgaon in Maharashtra, Asia's biggest onion market.

India has three seasons for onion — kharif (winter), late kharif and rabi (summer).

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Protest against ‘happy farmer' advertisement in Karnataka

Muralidhara Khajane

The farmer in picture committed suicide 18 months ago

— PHOTO: Special arrangement

Farmers protest in Baburayanakopplu village of Karnataka over the BJP advertisement carrying the picture of a deceased farmer.

MYSORE: An advertisement released by the Bharatiya Janata Party government in Karnataka in its campaign for the coming taluk and zilla elections has put it in a spot.

The advertisement, published in some Kannada newspapers on December 19, shows a ‘happy' farmer harvesting sugarcane and another driving a tractor. It claims that the “doors of his fortune opened after the BJP came to power.” This has enraged the farmers of Baburayanakopplu village in Srirangapatna taluk, Mandya district. The reason — the ‘happy farmer' committed suicide 18 months ago because of his inability to repay his debts.

The farmers staged a demonstration in Baburayanakopplu on the Mysore-Bangalore highway on Monday, protesting against the advertisement, and raised slogans denouncing the government.

According to Baburayanakopplu Taluk Panchayat member B.S. Sandesh, who led the protest, the person shown in the photograph was not even a farmer. He was Nagaraju (32), an agricultural labourer, from Baburayanakopplu.

Nagaraju committed suicide in May 2009 as he was unable to repay the money borrowed from a moneylender. An amateur photographer took his picture two years before he committed suicide, according to his father, Hanume Gowda.

Mr. Gowda said Nagaraju, who had studied up to the second standard, was survived by his wife, Lakshmamma, son Umesh and daughter Bhavya. No member of his family was affiliated to any political party and Nagaraju was the sole breadwinner of the family, he added.

The protesters demanded an apology from the BJP for misleading the people and urged Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa to tender an unconditional apology to Nagaraju's family. They also demanded financial assistance for his daughter's education and compensation to his family.

On realising the mistake, the BJP published an altered advertisement with another ‘happy farmer' in some dailies on Monday.

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Free distribution of saplings soon

P.Oppili

— Photo: A. Muralitharan

Green charm:The saplings lined up at the Forest Extension Centre nursery in Nanmangalam.

CHENNAI: A total of 16,800 saplings of 15 species are available at the Forest Extension Centre nursery in suburban Nanmangalam for free public distribution.

The centre, belonging to the research wing of the State Forest Department, started raising the saplings since May. The saplings are two to three feet tall. With the northeast monsoon rain on in Chennai and its suburbs, this will be right time to plant them, according to V.Irulandi, Chief Conservator of Forests (Forestry Extension).

The endemic species are: Mandhaarai, Baadham, Poovarasu, Punnai, Mahagony, Teak, Neem, Manjal Konnai, Ayal Vaagai, Rain tree, Murukkan, Bamboo, Tabebea, Sarakkonnai and Neer Marudhu.

The department plans to distribute the saplings free of cost to educational institutions, resident welfare associations and individuals too. The educational institution and resident welfare association can take 100 or more saplings each and plant them. “Our only condition is that they should provide proper protection, watering and ensure that the saplings grow in to a tree,” he said.

Several children visit the 3.5-ha campus, which has more than 1,300 trees of 50 endemic species to learn more about the importance of trees. The centre also imparts training to farmers. Those interested in getting the free saplings may contact the Assistant Conservator of Forests K. Asokan on 94454-68679, Mr Irulandi added

Date:21/12/2010 URL: http://www.thehindu.com/2010/12/21/stories/2010122162400300.htm

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Vegetable prices on an upswing

Special Correspondent

CHENNAI: Over the past few days, the prices of vegetables have been rising, an unusual phenomenon for this season.

While drumstick was sold at retail outlets at Rs.140 a kg last week it was Rs.160 on Monday. Onions are being sold between Rs.70 and Rs.90 a kg in the retail market. Among the cheapest vegetables are cabbage, potato, beetroot, chowchow and raddish which are selling at Rs.15 to Rs.17 a kg at retail stores. While green peas, from Uttar Pradesh, was priced at Rs.40 a kg, the same quantity of bitter gourd and saber beans, which are grown in Tamil Nadu, cost Rs.32 and Rs.40 respectively.

V.R. Soundararajan, advisor to Koyambedu Wholesale Onion Traders' Association, said rain had affected the crops grown in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Vijay Kumar, a grocer in Kilpauk, said people bought large quantities of onions as they feared that prices would rise further.

A householder in Velachery said carrot, beans and saber beans were sold for Rs.60 a kg each. Pumpkins were priced at Rs. 20 a kg.

Different prices

in website

However, the CMDA's website gave a different set of prices, with cabbage at Rs.7 a kg and green plantain at Rs.2 apiece. According to the website, the price of onion could range from Rs.40 to Rs.60 and potato, beans, raddish and bitter gourd are priced Rs.11 to Rs.15 a kg.

A press release from TUCS said that the vegetables, per kg, in its 10 outlets are sold at the following rates: onion - Rs.40; potato - Rs.20; tomato - Rs.35; beetroot - Rs.20; carrot - Rs.35; cabbage - Rs.16; beans - Rs.30; and green chillies - Rs.20.

The vegetables were being procured from farmers' cooperative associations in towns such as Hosur and Krishnagiri for the benefit of consumers, the release said.

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Paddy and rice stashed in 1,700 gunny bags seized

Photo: G. Moorthy.

HUGE CATCH: Paddy and rice bags that were seized in a private rice mill at Keeraithurai Mahalipatti

MADURAI: In a major catch, District Supply officials and Food Cell police unearthed paddy and rice allegedly stashed in as many as 1,700 gunny bags in a godown of a private rice mill in Keerathurai Mahalipatti here on Sunday.

Two workers of the rice mill were detained and a goods vehicle was impounded, officials said.

Following complaints from consumers that some ration shops claimed shortage of Re.1-rice, Collector C. Kamaraj formed a special team. Based on specific input, the officials led by District Supply Officer N. Murugiah, Tahsildars Muruganandam and Alexander, Food Cell Inspector Chakravarthi and team conducted a check at the mill in the wee hours.

Preliminary inquiries suggested that the mill operator had allegedly conspired with some Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation staffers and planned to sell the paddy procured from the TNCSC godown in the open market. In return, the mill operator would procure Re.1 rice from ration shops and despatch it to the TNCSC godown, which would give an impression that the mill had converted paddy into rice.

The allegation was that the mill operator, in connivance with some TNCSC officials, had not only planned to sell the high quality paddy in the open market, but also smuggle the Re.1 ration rice from the PDS outlets and send it to the TNCSC godown, a member part of the search operations said.

The TNCSC officials said that they would get the paddy converted into rice from private rice mills and keep the rice stocks ready for movement to needy locations in southern districts.

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Farmers demand enhancement of compensation to Rs. 15,000

Staff Reporter

Seek compensation to losses of houses, cattle; stage agitations in two districts

Photo:B.Velankanni Raj

joining hands:Members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam and All india Agricultural Workers Union staging a demonstration in front of the taluk office in Thirukuvalai, Nagapattinam district on Monday.

NAGAPATTINAM: Members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam and All India Agricultural Workers Union affiliated to the Communist Party of India (CPI) staged demonstrations at eight places in the district on Monday.

They demanded that the government enhance the compensation for rain damaged paddy crop from Rs.8,000 to Rs.15,000 per acre.

The losses of houses and cattle should be compensated with Rs.10,000 each, they demanded.

The protesters called for clearing of silt from rivers and shoring up the banks of tanks to prevent breaches and avoid disasters in the future.

The All India Agricultural Workers Union called for a waiver of crop loans in the wake of inundation of fields. Agricultural wage labourers, who were jobless in the aftermath of rain, should be given Rs.2,000 and 60 kg of rice. .

The demonstrations were held in front of the taluk offices here in Nagapattinam, Thirukuvalai, Keezhvelur, Mayiladuthurai, Sirkazhi, Kuthalam, Vedaranyam, and Tharangambadi. Over 853 people from all over the district, including 255 women, participated in the protests.

Tiruvarur

In Tiruvarur district, Krishnan, Union Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, led the agitation at Mannargudi.

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Helpline for procuring paddy, says official

Staff Reporter

KAKINADA: Additional Joint Collector B. Rama Rao on Monday said a special helpline with phone number ‘1077' was arranged in the Collectorate to address grievances pertaining to paddy procurement. He advised the farmers to bring the discoloured paddy to the nearby paddy procurement centres arranged by the government.

Addressing the weekly grievance cell programme here, Mr. Rama Rao said majority of farmers were unaware of the prices fixed by the government to procure discoloured paddy. He said there was no value cut for paddy that was discoloured up to 10 per cent, but it was in vogue for above 10 per cent to up to 50 per cent of discolouring.

Mr. Rama Rao said efforts were on to fill up over 1,200 vacancies of anganwadi workers and aayas in the Women and Child Welfare department and the application forms would be made available through the revenue offices soon. District Revenue Officer S. Venkata Rao and other officials were present.

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‘Best possible relief offered to farmers'

Special Correspondent

My government is pro-farmer and will ever remain so, says Kiran Kumar Reddy

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Chief Minister reviews the progress of paddy procurement from New Delhi with officials

Lists schemes being implemented for farmers like free power supply and 'Jalayagnam'

— PTI Photo

Attentive:Congress president Sonia Gandhi interacting with Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy at the plenary session of the party in New Delhi on Monday.

HYDERABAD: Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy has contended that he had offered the "best possible relief package" to the farmers in rain-hit districts in spite of financial constraints and said his was a pro-farmer government and will ever remain so.

Reviewing the progress of paddy procurement from New Delhi with the officials, Mr. Reddy elucidated on the 'best' part of the package by referring to the steep hike in the scale of relief, covering not only crops but even milch animals, sheep/goats, lost boats/fishing nets and handloom/yarn damaged.

Farmer's son

He said he too was the son of a farmer and it was his bounden duty to protect their interests at any cost. Explaining the pro-farmer profile of the Congress government, he listed out the numerous schemes being implemented like free power supply to 27 lakh pumpsets and Jalayagnam programme to provide irrigation to one crore acres of new ayacut. "The government is with you and it will take care of all your needs. It will not allow you suffer on any count," he added.

Relaxing norms

Mr. Reddy said his government had prevailed upon the FCI to relax its norms for purchase of damaged, discoloured and sprouted paddy and even begun procurement on its own to buy crop damaged up to 50 per cent. Full MSP would be ensured up to 10 per cent damage and only a minimum value cut would be made for the damage from 10 to 50 per cent.

In addition to 375 centres purchasing paddy through FCI, Civil Supplies Corporation and self-help groups, more such facilities would be opened wherever necessary. “This is what any government can do under the present circumstances”.

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Move to improve agricultural production in Rajasthan

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Agriculture Minister Harjiram Burdak on Monday laid emphasis on testing the properties of soil and water in the rural areas before devising the schemes for improving agricultural production. The exercise should be accompanied by preparation of a map on the status of nutritive elements in soil, he said.

Addressing a review meeting of officers at Pant Krishi Bhavan here, Mr. Burdak said the farmers in the State should be encouraged to adopt water-saving techniques for irrigation, such as sprinklers and drip irrigation.

The funds allocated under different schemes should be fully utilised for welfare of farmers, he added.

Mr. Burdak said the targets set under the National Food Security Mission, National Agriculture Plan and the State Plan should be conveyed to the implementing agencies for ensuring their achievement. The Minister also discussed with the officers the steps for expanding the godown network, certification of seeds and artificial insemination of livestock.

Date:21/12/2010 URL: http://www.thehindu.com/2010/12/21/stories/2010122157040300.htm

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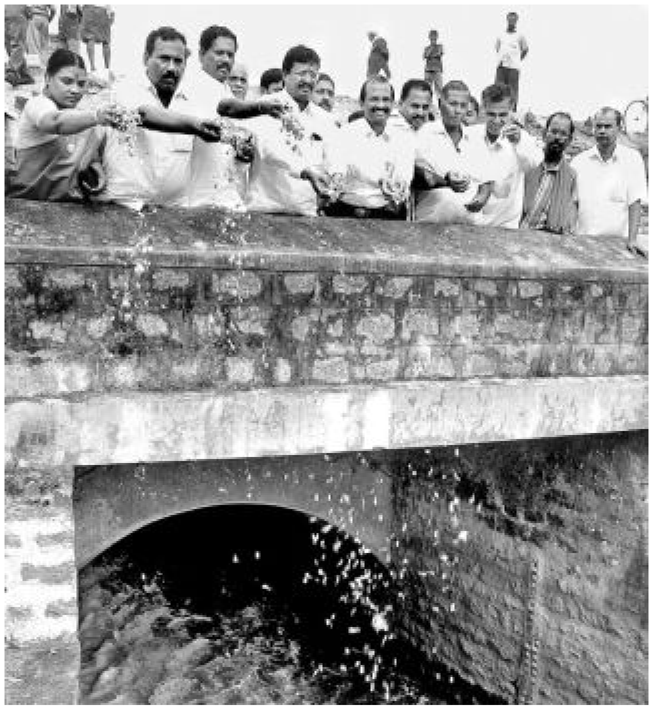
Water released from Barur lake for second crop

Staff Reporter



For irrigation:District Revenue Officer

KRISHNAGIRI: Water from Barur Big Lake was released for irrigation of second crop here on Monday.

District Revenue Officer C. Prakasam opened the sluice gate of the lake after a puja. Water will be released from the east and west main canals from Monday to May 3, 2011 for irrigation.

Initially, water will be released for five days a week and later for three days a week on a rotation basis.

Mr. Prakasam appealed to the farmers to use water judiciously so that it reached the tail-end farmers.

A total of 4,729.25 acres will benefit from the water release. Over 2200 acres will be irrigated through other water bodies.

The agriculture land in Barur, Arasampatti, Pendarahalli, Keelkuppam, Puliyur, Kottapatti, Jingalkathirampatti, Thathampatti and Virupampatti villages will benefit.

hindustantimes

Press Trust Of India

Chandigarh, December 20, 2010

First Published: 19:34 IST(20/12/2010)

Last Updated: 19:35 IST(20/12/2010)

Imported onion arrive from Pakistan

Amid soaring prices of onion in the country, truck loads of the commodity arrived in chandigarh on Monday from Pakistan through the Attari-Wagah land route for supply to northern markets in India.

As many as 13 truck loads (5 to 15 tonne per truck) of onion have arrived from Pakistan, a senior official of customs department in Amritsar told PTI without quantifying the total import consignment.

“About five (Indian) importers have brought in onion from Lahore today for supply in the markets of Ludhiana, Amritsar, Jalandhar in Punjab and Delhi,” the official said.

The landed cost of onion from Pakistan stood at Rs 18-20 per kg, he said adding this included custom duty, cess, transportation and handling charges.

According to importers, it was for the first time in this year, onions are being imported from Pakistan.

“We this year exported onion to Pakistan in the month of March and April. Now we are importing it from them (Pakistan),” Rajdeep Uppal, the MD of a leading Amritsar trading company Narain Exim said.

Uppal said as far as his company is concerned, it imported 100 Metric Tonne (MT) of onion today at a rate of USD 400 per MT .

He said it would import 500 MT of onion in coming days from Sindh provision in Pakistan.

Notably, onion prices in the country have doubled to Rs 60-70 per kg in retail markets owing to low supply of crop from Maharashtra, Gujarat and southern states.

India and Pakistan agreed to commence truck movement from Attari Check post in Oct 2007 after a gap of sixty years to boost bilateral trade.

India mainly imports dry fruits from Pakistan and exports perishable commodities like onion, potato, tomato, garlic, livestock, cotton and maize through road route.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/640805.aspx

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Last Updated: 23:36 IST(20/12/2010)

PM expects inflation to stabilise at 5.5% by March

Manmohan Singh possibly soothed some nerves in his party when he told the Congress plenary on Monday that he expected inflation to stabilise at 5.5% by March. A worried Congress had asked the government to maintain constant vigil on rising prices and address the issue with “candour and courage”.

The party’s economic resolution said neither the Centre nor states should tolerate “inefficiency or corruption in the system that lead to artificial scarcity or goods or arbitrary increase in prices”. The Centre, it said, should ask the states to deal “sternly with hoarding, black-marketing and profiteering”.

The Prime Minister also projected a growth rate of 8.5% for the entire year and between 9% and 10% from the next year onward.

“Inflation remains a cause for serious concern.... We have made all the efforts to contain inflation and we will continue to do so. In recent days, the rate of inflation has come down to 7.5%. We expect this downward trend to continue,” Singh said.

In November, inflation declined to 7.48% from 8.58% in the previous month. However, food inflation rose to 9.46% for the week ended December 4 from 8.69% in the previous week.

The Congress has come under sharp attack from the opposition, especially the BJP and Left, for not doing enough to control prices. The parties had called an all-India shutdown in July to protest the soaring prices of commodities. Even key UPA allies — Trinamool and DMK — have protested over price rise.

Aware of political sensitiveness of the issue, Congress president Sonia Gandhi in her opening remarks at the party conclave asked the government to keep prices of essential commodities at affordable levels.

Referring to economic growth in his address, Singh said despite the global economic crisis, the country has been able to maintain a healthy growth rate.

Home minister P Chidambaram compared growth rates of NDA and UPA. “The highest growth rate during NDA was 6.4% while the lowest in UPA I stood at 6.7%. The average growth rate in entire NDA rule was 5.8%. Ours is a mirror image — at 8.5% during UPA I, 7.4% in first year of UPA II with second year poised for 9%,” he said.

http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/640620.aspx

Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather

Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Dec 21

Max Min

27.4º | 22.4º

Rain: 1.0 mm in 24hrs

Humidity: 83%

Wind: Normal

Sunrise: 6:25

Sunset: 17:47

Barometer: 1014.0

Tomorrow's Forecast

Rainy

Wednesday, Dec 22

Max Min

26º | 21º

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Dec 23	**Dec 24**	**Dec 25**	**Dec 26**	**Dec 27**
				
24º | 20º	24º | 21º	27º | 22º	27º | 22º	26º | 22º
Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy	Cloudy

DECCAN Chronicle On The Web
Published on Deccan Chronicle (http://www.deccanchronicle.com)

Farmers lay siege to Chouhan residence

By LALIT SHASTRI

Dec 21 2010

The state capital was under virtual siege on Monday as the farmers agitating under the banner of Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), affiliated with Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, converged here from all parts of the state to go on a sit-in agitation to press their demand for immediate resolution of their burning problems.

All roads leading to Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan’s residence remained choked and normal life of the citizens was affected on Monday as thousands of farmers started pouring into the city riding their tractor-trolleys for a “battle to the finish”.
The farmers started arriving here in large numbers on Monday morning and began converging at the polytechnic square — the venue of their sit-in agitation near the chief minister’s residence. Soon normal traffic was disrupted as the city roads were filled with tractor-trolleys and other vehicles bringing the farmers to Bhopal. In the process, office-goers and more particularly school children had a harrowing time especially while returning home.
Clashes were also witnessed between the farmers and commuters at the busy Roshanpura square close to Raj Bhavan. There was heavy police presence and Rapid Action Force personnel were also keeping a close watch over the situation. Till the time of filing this report, the agitation was continuing.
The farmers are mainly agitated on the issue of electricity, water and poor supply of fertilisers. When this correspondent talked to one of the agitators, he said farmers were being compelled to commit suicide and were being sent to jail for not honouring fake and fictitious electricity bills.

Source URL:

http://www.deccanchronicle.com/national/farmers-lay-siege-chouhan-residence-729

THE TIMES OF INDIA

India buying back onions from Pakistan after exporting tonnes

ET Bureau, Dec 21, 2010, 10.04am IST

CHANDIGARH/PUNE: After exporting onions to Pakistan, India is now buying some back.

Traders are importing onions from across the border to take advantage of the vegetable's soaring prices in the domestic market. Onion prices have more than doubled over the past few days and crossed Rs 75 a kg in some wholesale markets.

On Monday, the government suspended export of the vegetable until January 15 to cool the prices. The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (Nafed) in Delhi.

The ban came as 12 trucks loaded with onions arrived at the Attari-Wagah border. This was the first import of the vegetable via the land route in 12 years. One truck carries 10-15 tonnes of goods. Some traders put the cost of landed onion at Rs 18-20 per kg.

India had exported thousands of tonnes of onion to Pakistan earlier this year when the country was trying to recover from catastrophic floods. But the country is now facing a severe crunch of the vegetable as unseasonal rains have destroyed the crop in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

"Foreseeing a poor crop in the country and current high prices, we are importing onion from Pakistan through the land route," said Amritsar-based trader Rajdeep Uppal, who has signed contracts to import over 500 tonnes.

The vegetable is priced between Rs 30 and Rs 35 a kg in most wholesale markets in Maharashtra.

Onion is selling for Rs 45-50 a kg in Delhi. But in some markets, such as Sangli in Maharashtra, the vegetable touched Rs 75 a kg on Monday. It was priced at Rs 10 a kg in wholesale trade around this time last year.

"The quantity of onions coming from Bijapur in Karnataka has reduced significantly and this is reflecting in prices," said Tanaji Patil, auction chief at Sangli Agricultural Produce Market Committee.

A trader at Azadpur Mandi in Delhi, Asia's largest fruit and vegetable wholesale market, said onion prices would continue to firm up until February.

"Prices will fall when new crop from Pune belt starts," said Naraan Das of Hemant Trading Company. Some traders, however, said the prices could come down sooner if the government withdraws the 7% import duty on onions.

21 Dec, 2010, 04.07AM IST,ET Bureau

Chana seen range-bound

MUMBAI: Benchmark January chana futures slipped on Monday on estimates of higher output, but higher government support prices and hopes of a pick-up in local demand restricted the fall, analysts said.

Chana futures are expected to trade range-bound on Tuesday, they said.

“Movement in chana futures is sideways. But prices are likely to gain in coming days due to depleting stocks,” said An uj Agarwal, analyst at Nirmal Bang. Demand for chana tends to go up during wedding season. Agarwal expects the January contract to touch Rs 2,625-2,650 per 100 kg in the long term.

India has raised MSP of chana by 19.3% to Rs 2,100 per 100 kg and that of rapeseed by 1.06%

to Rs 1,850 per 100 kg. In Indore, a major trading centre in Madhya Pradesh, chana fell Rs 12 to end at Rs 2,342/ 100 kg. Total acreage in 2010/11 is likely to rise by 15-20% due to abundant soil moisture and higher government support price, which is encouraging farmers to increase area under cultivation.

21 Dec, 2010, 04.04AM IST,PTI

Lanka bans felling of coconut trees

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka on Monday announced a total ban on felling of coconut trees as the country was gripped by a severe shortage of the commodity which is a dietary staple.

Coconut Development Minister Jagath Pushpakumara said the government was invoking provisions of a 1971 Act to slap a total ban on the cutting down of trees.

“Only trees affected by any disease can be cut down with our special permission,” the minister said, adding that the move was aimed at maintaining coconut production.

Sri Lanka last month ordered coconuts from India to meet a serious shortage in the local market. Coconut was one of main agricultural products that Lanka exports to other countries along with trade mark Ceylon tea and rubber. However, the prices of coconut has gone up recently in local markets as coconut lands were increasingly used for housing development.

Sri Lankan traditional meals are based on coconut milk and oil and the tree is considered to provide for multi- purpose products. Traditional coconut industry suffers heavily due to land sales and introduction of substitute oils to Sri Lanka over the last three decades. Thousands of coconut trees also destroyed by several diseases over the past few years.

21 Dec, 2010, 04.00AM IST,ET Bureau

Sharp rise in onion price due to hoarding

NEW DELHI: The government on Monday suspended onion exports till mid-January and raised the minimum export price for those already contracted to contain the sharply rising retail prices.

Retail onion prices have risen to more than Rs 50 a kilo in most parts of the country.

Export of onion is regulated through the mechanism of minimum export price, which is fixed by Nafed in consultation with other state trading enterprises and leading associate shippers.

Exporters require no-objection certificates for onion exports from the co-operative major. These have been suspended by NAFED, National Consumer Cooperative Federation and other state trading enterprises.

“The issuance of no-objection certificate will be voluntarily suspended by NAFED, NCCF and other STEs for exports,’’ an official statement said.

The minimum export prices or MEP for onions has also been raised to $1,200 a tonne from a much lower $525/tonne(C&F, Dubai base) for the NOCs already issued.

NAFED and NCCF will also sell onion at cheaper rates from Tuesday through their retail outlets.

When asked about the reasons for the sharp rise in onion prices, commerce and industry minister Anand Sharma said the price rise was due to hoarding and there was enough stock of onion in the country.

Rising onion prices, lower acreage under wheat and an expected diesel price hike are expected to impact once again on food prices and inflation, which has muted of late.

It is in view of this that the price fixation committee met to fix the MEP for onion export.

“The NOCs which have already been issued till today will be effected only on $1,200 per tonne C&F. NAFED and NCCF will start retail sale of onion from 21.12.2010 through their own outlets for making available onion to the consumer at a reasonable price,” the statement said.

NAFED has been keenly monitoring the availability of onions since end November on news of Maharashtra onion crop failing due to untimely rains.

Standing crop was destroyed, leading to current prices as high as Rs 60-80/kg.

In end November the minimum export price of onion was increased by $ 150 per tonne to restrict exports.
The increase was for all destinations across the board, bringing up, the MEP for Gulf countries to $525/tonne for export during the remaining part of November 2010 as compared to $375/tonne.
The current increase in price is largely attributed to Kharif crop of onion getting affected owing to untimely rains in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and also due to rains in Nashik area of Maharashtra.
“This is an ephemeral spurt in price which will ease out by the second week of December 2010 when arrivals of onion from late Kharif season in Maharashtra start,” a Nafed official said.
The stock of stored onion from the last Rabi has also been exhausted.

21 Dec, 2010, 03.58AM IST, S Sanandakumar,ET Bureau

Seafood exports zoom 15% during Apr-Oct

KOCHI: The Indian seafood sector is on a roll. Exports have seen an increase of 15.40% in rupee terms and 21.53% in dollar terms during the April to October period on the strength of higher demand for shrimp from the US and Japan. Better exports of squid to the EU markets have also contributed to the performance of the seafood export sector during this period.

The seafood exports from the country increased by 3.48% to touch 3,70,737 tonne during the period under review. The higher value realisation is on account of the export of high-value items like shrimp. The export shrimp, which has a 50% share in the total value of seafood exports, saw a rise of 27.16% in rupee terms and 34.04% in dollar terms during the period.

Anwar Hashim, president of Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI), told ET that during the period there was better vannamie production and higher black tiger prawn landings. "There was better demand from the US and Japan for shrimp," he said. The winter demand is also better this year, he said adding that the US import of seafood from countries like India is higher after the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. In quantity terms, the increase in shrimp exports was around 8.13%.

Squid landings were much higher this year in Kollam, Kochi and Mangalore ports. As a result, squid exports were higher this year with the quantity of exports showing a 69.16% rise. In rupee value, the upswing was 87.48% while in dollar terms it was 99.25%.

While the largest market for Indian seafood, namely the EU, showed a negative growth rate in volumes, the better demand this time came from the US and Japan. The volume of exports to the US increased by 44% while earnings in rupee value showed a 86.37%. The increase in dollar value was even higher at 96.31%. Commenting on the better US imports, Abdul Kareem, managing director of Welcome Fisheries, said that he "expected the US demand to continue for some time".

21 Dec, 2010, 03.55AM IST, Rituraj Tiwari,ET Bureau

NSEL to launch potato spot trading from Feb

JAIPUR: The National Spot Exchange Ltd (NSEL) is planning to launch potato spot trading on its exchange from February next year. It will be the first perishable commodity to be traded under this umbrella.

NSEL managing director and chief executive officer Anjani Sinha told ET: “The longer shelf life of potato offers us an opportunity to include it in the perishable commodity segment. The shelf life is 8-10 months. Also, its demand remains the same across the year. The launch of potato will be of great significance to traders, physical market participants, corporates as well as farmers,” he said.

Apart from that, the exchange has also lined up an investment of Rs 700 crore over next three years to strengthen its network. “We will ramp up our presence from 89 to 500 centres across the country. At every centre, we will provide warehousing, storage, grading, weighing and other facilities to our traders and farmers,” he said. With its expansion plans in place, the exchange aims to clock a daily turnover of Rs 5,000 crore. At present, the daily volume traded on this platform is Rs 400 crore.

Business Standard

Tuesday, Dec 21, 2010

Trade body SEA for blending more than two cooking oils

Newswire18 / Mumbai December 21, 2010, 0:54 IST

Solvent Extractors Association of India has sought blending of more than two oils to improve the nutritional value of cooking oils, which it believes will also balance the prices of various oils.

Currently, the government allows blending of only two cooking oils with the proviso that the proportion of one not be less than 20 per cent of total volume.

"The association has strongly pleaded with the Food Safety Standard Authority of India that blending of more than two refined vegetable oils be permitted whilst fixing the specifications like colour, moisture, volatile matter, acid value, unsaponifiable matter and flash point as being followed in most of advanced countries," SEA President Sunil Goenka wrote in a letter to members.

The industry body also said that issuing of Agmark certificate for blended oils should be done away with as it does not serve any purpose.

"Removal of such procedural hurdles and allowing multiple blending of oils will ensure easy availability of nutritional vegetable oils to the consumers and also help in balancing the prices of various oils as it will reduce consumer preference for any particular oil," the letter said.

The industry body is also for use of India-made sal fat, sal stearin, mango stearin and kokum fat by the domestic chocolate industry, as use of vegetable oil fat in making chocolate is currently prohibited in the country.

SEA said, the same is exported to European countries for use in chocolates in the form of cocoa butter equivalents.

China visit

Meanwhile, SEA plans a trade delegation to China in March for marketing oilmeals, as it sees the most populous country as a next big market.

"China currently buys about 400,000-500,000 tonnes of various oilmeals from India. Export to China has a large potential and the exports can be doubled if more attention is paid to the Chinese market," the SEA president wrote.

The trade body will also send delegations to neighbouring countries such as Cambodia and Laos, as they are perceived as upcoming markets, he said.

India currently has surplus oilmeals, especially that of soymeal, due to increased crushing and comparatively lower export demand during peak soybean supply season.

SEA has also communicated to its members that castor oilmeal has been approved by the government of India as an organic fertiliser.

Tea industry asks govt to share social burden

Supratim Dey / Guwahati December 21, 2010, 0:52 IST

High social costs and fierce competition in the global markets have prompted the tea industry to ask the central and state governments to share its social burdens.

The industry has requested the government to bring tea garden workers under the several welfare schemes of Bharat Nirman. This, it feels, would help improve the social infrastructure of tea plantations.

“The cost burden of social utilities provided to our workers has now become unbearable. Every now and then, we hear assurances that social costs will be eased but nothing tangible has been done yet. We are consistently losing ground in the global market because we have lost our competitive edge owing to our higher cost of production and sales, which has also been accepted by the central government,” said D P Maheshwari, president of Tea Association of India (TAI) at the 30th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of its Assam branch, held in Tezpur on Sunday.

“Nothing comes free in this world and certainly not quality. Costs of inputs, labour and staff wages, fuel and power, fertiliser, transportation – the price of each and every item – are steadily on the rise and we can do very little to control it.”

However, the tea industry has praised the Assam government for allowing tea garden workers and residents to enjoy the benefits of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) that is run under the public-private partnership model.

Maheshwari said, TAI has been pleading with both the Union and state governments to cover tea gardens under the various welfare schemes of Bharat Nirman.

According to him, inclusion of tea gardens under the Bharat Nirman schemes will not only improve the quality of the lives of the garden workers, most of whom are adivasis, but would also reduce the burden of the garden managements on account of social cost.

He said though price realisation was good this year, gains were negated by an increase in production costs. “Since cost of almost all inputs are beyond our control, to survive and sustain is a major challenge before the Indian tea industry on Monday.”

Coconut, oil prices soar on low supplies

George Joseph / Kochi December 21, 2010, 0:51 IST

A sharp fall in the supply of coconuts and copra has meant a sharp increase in their prices and of coconut oil in recent weeks.

According to market sources, supply would be very tight for the next five to six weeks, since this was the off-season for coconut plucking in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Untimely rainfall had also damaged plantation crop, aggravating the supply problem.

The price of a single coconut, Rs 6-7 four months earlier, is now Rs 12-16 in local markets. Even at these tags, both coconut and copra are often not available. Here and in Thiruvananthapuram, a single coconut can even attract a price of Rs 16-20.

In line, the price of coconut oil in wholesale markets here has crossed Rs 8,000 a quintal, a record.

In the retail market here, the price of a kg of coconut oil has risen to Rs 85-90. Market sources expect a change in the conditions only after a month, when a fresh crop of the ‘Makaram’ season comes to the markets. They said the huge demand for coconuts for worshipping at the Sabarimalai temple has also enhanced the demand multifold.

Supply of coconut oil from Tamil Nadu, the largest producing state, is weak due to heavy rainfall. Rain had seriously affected the drying of copra and affected the quality available in the market.

The copra producing season in Kerala usually starts by December, but this time most producers lacking coconuts and the crushing mills are in trouble. Coconut oil dealers expect a change in the market condition by mid- January.

Demand, especially industrial demand, for copra and coconut, had risen in recent months, as there is heavy increase in the sale of coconut oil-based fast moving consumer goods and ayurvedic medical products. Sharp increase in the prices of other edible oils like palm oil, sunflower oil and groundnut oil has also impacted coconut oil.

The shortage in production has sharply increased the price of coconut husk from Tamil Nadu. This has upset small and medium-size coir units which mainly depend on Tamil Nadu for the husk. The price of coconut husk from Tamil Nadu has almost doubled in the past couple of weeks.

Traders say one sequel ahs been a rise in adulteration of coconut oil, mixing it with cheaper ones such as palm kernel oil and used oils. This mixing is being done at the crushing stage and cannot be detected by smelling or tasting. There’s only a mild change in the colour.

FCI steps up efforts to offload wheat stocks

Dilip Kumar Jha / Mumbai December 21, 2010, 0:46 IST

Sitting on a huge stockpile of foodgrain, more than double the buffer norm, the Food Corporation of India (FCI) has stepped up efforts to sell wheat under the open market sales scheme (OMSS) through online spot exchanges.

FCI has allocated 40,000 tonnes wheat in Andhra Pradesh godowns to the NCDEX Spot. The latter is the spot commodity trading arm of the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange Ltd and is set to float its first tender later this week. The floor would be sold online to millers at a uniform price.

“Out of 60,000 tonnes wheat in the state, the government foodgrain procurement agency managed to sell only 20,000 tonnes. We will sell the remaining 40,000 tonnes,” said Rajesh Sinha, head of NCDEX Spot.

If FCI manages to sell any additional quantity, NCDEX Spot will get less foodgrain, says FCI Chairman Siraj Hussain.

On October 11, FCI signed an agreement with the National Spot Exchange (NSEL), a Financial Technologies-promoted spot commodity selling platform, for liquidating wheat stocks in Delhi. NSEL has conducted 11 auctions and sold 32,150 tonnes wheat under OMSS.

Despite several government schemes for below poverty line (BPL) families and sale of wheat at subsidised rates to above poverty line (APL) families, the lifting from states has been poor. In the last two months, FCI has sold just four million tonnes wheat.

Against the buffer norm of 20 mt of rice and wheat, the government’s holding on December 1 was 48.44 mt. The wheat stockpile was 23.9 mt, as against the buffer norm of 8.2 mt.

Contrary to the advise of Kaushik Basu, the chief economic adviser to the finance ministry, FCI is not willing to cut procurement this year. “We will continue with our existing procurement centres this season as well and buy foodgrain at the minimum support price announced by the central government. However, if farmers get more from the open market, they are free to sell there,” said Hussain.

Basu recently said that availability of foodgrain in the open market should be doubled to ease prices. Of the country's overall production of nearly 235 mt, FCI has been procuring over 200 mt foodgrain annually for three years, leaving limited quantity for the open market.

The allocation to states has been raised substantially in the past two months, especially for APL families, at a subsidised rate. The government has allowed additional allocation of wheat at Rs 8.45 a kg to states. BPL families continue to get wheat at Rs 2 a kg. If state governments were to lift the allocations made by the government, FCI would not face the storage problem as acutely as last year, said Hussain.

Govt bans onion exports till Jan15 on price spike

Press Trust Of India / New Delhi December 21, 2010, 0:43 IST

Prices have risen 70% to Rs 60-70 a kg in the past few days.

A worried government on Monday decided to suspend onion exports till January 15 in the wake of skyrocketing prices of the commodity which is selling between Rs 60-70 a kg.

Agriculture cooperative major Nafed, a regulating agency, has been asked to stop giving fresh clearance to exporters. The government has also made exports almost impossible for those who are already in possession of 'no objection certificate' (NOC) given by the Nafed and 12 other agencies.

It has more than doubled the minimum export price (MEP) to $1,200 a tonne from $525, meaning no shipment can take place below this price.

“We have decided to voluntarily suspend issuing NOC to onion exporters till January 15 and have also raised the MEP to $1,200 a tonne for those NOCs which is yet to be executed,” an official said.

The decision to suspend exports was taken at an emergency meeting of Nafed held on Monday.

Onion prices have doubled to Rs 60-70 a kg in retail markets in the national capital in the past few days due to supply crunch, prompting the government to call an emergency meeting to review export of the important agri produce.

Onion prices which were already high at Rs 35-40 a kg rose astronomically since yesterday when it skyrocketed to Rs 60-70 a kg in the retail outlets in Delhi and surrounding areas.

The wholesale price of the onion has soared to Rs 30-60 a kg in Azadpur market (Asia’s biggest fruit & vegetables market) since yesterday, trade sources said. Traders attributed the phenomenon to supply crunch due to unseasonal rain in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Southern states, bulk producers of the vital produce.

“Supply of onion has dipped almost by 50 per cent in the Azadpur market,” General Secretary of Chamber of Azadpur Fruit & Vegetables, Rajendra Sharma said. Only 80 tempos (each one carrying nine tonnes) and 20 trucks (each truck carrying 15 tonnes) arrived in the Azadpur market on Monday from Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujarat, Sharma said.

Surendra Bidhi Raj, an Onion trader, opioned that rise in onion prices is due to large-scale export of the produce to gulf countries and neighbouring Sri Lanka and Bangladesh since September last.

They said the supply crisis is expected to continue for another 15 days till there is a pick up in arrival of fresh produce from Nashik in Maharashtra and Gujarat. Maharashtra is the largest producer of onion in the country.

Govt to retain sugar import duty at 60%

Anindita Dey / Mumbai December 21, 2010, 0:41 IST

The government is likely to retain an import duty of 60 per cent on import of sugar from January 1, 2011.In order to facilitate import of sugar last year following shortage in supply, the duty was slashed to zero in July 2009 till December 31, 2010.

Prior to this, the import duty on sugar was stipulated at 60 per cent since 2000.

The ministry of agriculture has suggested a reduction in the import duty so that imports do not work out costlier when the need arises. Towards this, it proposes capping the duty in the range of 10-30 per cent, official sources said . However under the current circumstances, the finance ministry is not willing to cut the import duty below 60 per cent , sources said.

“In the current scenario, when the output is good, there is no need for imports. Even if one does, it will be not be lucrative to sell in the domestic market. Therefore even if duty is reduced, it does not help anybody. The question of higher duty and its implications arises in a situation when the demand goes up and supply falls short.", the source said.

Therefore the ministry is working on rationalising the import duty and had informally suggested the same to finance ministry which is at the helm of deciding the import duty structure on commodities.

Sources said, a formal proposal on import duty cut will be sent to the finance ministry after assessing the output by early January 2011 when the agriculture ministry expects to get firm projections on cane acreage , yield and sugar recovery.

This will then be considered as part of budget recommendations, sources said .

Official projections have pegged sugar output this year at 24.5 million tonnes (mt) while industry reportedly is sticking to its outlook of 25.5 mt against a local consumption demand of only 23 mt.

Recently for better price recovery, the government had allowed export of half million tonnes of sugar. Earlier, exports were allowed under ALS (advanced license scheme) of one million tonnes and for re-export from ports, the quantity of imported sugar lying unused last year.

Cotton production may miss estimate on untimely rain

Bloomberg / December 21, 2010, 0:39 IST

Output may be around 35 mn bales, 2.7% less than the Nov estimate.

Cotton production in India, the world's second-biggest grower, will be less than previously forecast after excess rainfall in some growing regions hampered harvests, a group said.

Output in the year started October 1 may total 34.75 million bales of 170 kg each, 2.7 per cent less than the 35.7 million bales forecast in November, the Cotton Association of India said in an e-mailed statement on December 18. The nation's Cotton Advisory Board predicted the crop at 32.55 million bales.

A smaller crop may bolster a record-breaking rally in global prices this year as adverse weather damaged crops in the US, China and Pakistan. Cotton jumped by the daily limit for a third day to a record $1.5412 a pound on Monday on signs that growers may struggle to meet mounting demand from China, the world's biggest consumer.

"We have lowered the estimate to a conservative level, though rain has been equally beneficial to the crop in some areas," Dhiren Sheth, president of the association, said in an interview. "We are hoping the government will allow more cotton exports as there's going to be enough surplus available."

India's textile ministry in October issued export contracts for 5.5 million bales for shipment by December 15. Actual exports were far below that amount, so the Directorate General of Foreign

Trade will issue fresh contracts for the unshipped amount after it determines how much cotton is available, it said on its website.

Market tightness

Cotton for March delivery gained 4 cents, or 2.7 per cent, to $1.5412 a pound on ICE Futures US in New York and traded at that level at 1:26 pm Mumbai time. Prices have more than doubled this year, heading for the biggest gain since 1973."It looks like the tightness in the global cotton market will continue for a while, as the US seems to have sold out most of its crop in the absence of supplies from India," Sheth said. "India remains the only major country with cotton supplies."India's domestic demand may total 26.6 million bales, leaving a surplus of 14.3 million bales, less than the 15.3 million estimated last month, the cotton association said. Cotton sales by farmers were 10.2 million bales as of December 19, compared with 10 million a year earlier, according to the Cotton Corporation of India, the nation's biggest buyer.

THE HINDU Business Line

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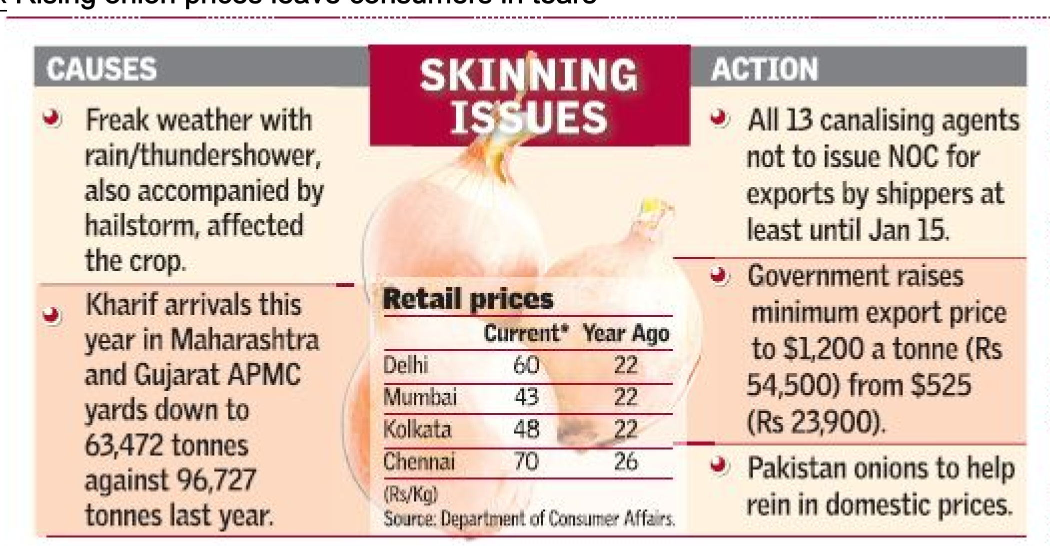
Back Rising onion prices leave consumers in tears



M.R. Subramani

Chennai, Dec. 20

Onion prices on Monday zoomed to unprecedented levels, with rates crossing Rs 60 a kg at agricultural produce marketing yards in Maharashtra.

The Centre swung into action immediately, raising the minimum export price to $1,200 (Rs 54,500) a tonne from $525 (Rs 23,900) and suspending shipments at least until January 15. However, traders see little respite for customers from high onion prices at least until middle of January.

Crop damage

Freak weather in November that lead to rain and thundershower along with hailstorm affected the crop in Maharashtra and Gujarat. These two States contribute significantly to onion arrivals between September and December. Besides, rain in the South has affected the crop in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, where it arrives during October-November.

Dr R.P. Gupta, Director of Nashik-based National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation, said 30-35 per cent of the crop had been damaged due to un-seasonal rain in Maharashtra and Gujarat. “But if you take the 10-15 per cent overall loss estimated in kharif onion crop this year, production should be the same as last year,” he said.

“There is quality problem with at least 90 per cent of the arrivals. For the rest 10 per cent of good arrivals, there is great demand, leading to surge in prices,” said Mr Rupesh Jaju, an exporter from Nashik.

The problem worsened on Monday as buyers, who had been waiting for the past 3-4 months for the prices to drop, entered the market.

At Lasalgaon, Asia's biggest onion market, quality ones commanded Rs 6,100 a quintal. At Gondal in Rajkot, Gujarat, they quoted at Rs 1,100 for 20-kg. A look at statistics shows that arrivals are lower this year (see graphic).

‘Enough stocks'

The Commerce and Industry Minister, Mr Anand Sharma, said: “We had reviewed the situation a week ago due to speculative hoarding. Enough stocks are available in the country. The export duty on onions has been raised substantially. We will make it prohibitive until the domestic situation improves.”

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Back **Use of banned pesticides brews trouble for coffee exporters**

Different eco standards, labour availability adding to woes.

A. Srinivas

Bangalore, Dec. 20The use of controversial pesticides, such as endosulfan and paraquat hydrochloride, poses a challenge to the West European export houses in India, such as ECOM, Ned and NKG, which are at the forefront of the ‘certified coffee' initiative in India.

Growers using these chemicals fail the standards set for producing coffee in a sustainable way, thereby adding to the costs of these export houses that would have offered to bear the charges of certification in the initial years.

Nespresso, which is a major buyer of sustainable coffees from these export houses and is in the process of implementing its own certification system in a big way, is among the major roasters grappling with these issues, sources said.

Different standards

The use of endosulfan persists, albeit only in small pockets, in a situation of high prices, as growers do not want to risk losing any crop to berry borer infestation.

Paraquat hydrochloride, a weedicide, is also used beyond acceptable levels, to offset the non-availability of labour, industry sources said. The Central Coffee Research Institute does not recommend the use of endosulfan, banned in Europe and to be banned in the US with effect from mid-2011. Paraquat hydrochloride is in its recommended pesticides list.

According to industry sources, about 12,000-15,000 litres of endosulfan are used in Chikmagalur and Hassan district in a season, while Kodagu accounts for 5,000-6,000 litres. The shift from arabica to robusta over the years has, however, contributed to the reduced use of endosulfan, they said. Its usage is negligible in Tamil Nadu, as the coffee is grown in higher regions, where infestation levels are lower.

Chloropyriphos, the chemical recommended by CCRI to combat berry borer, is not as effective as endosulfan at high levels of infestation, industry sources said.

Medium-size planters with 50-70 acres, managed by non-technical staff, are most prone to using endosulfan. Most corporates are not using endosulfan, as their field level staff is competent, sources said.

Dr Philippe Vaast, a project leader with CAFNET, an EU-financed project on agro-forestry, certification and environmental services with respect to coffee, has been working among 40 villages in the Cauvery watershed.

He said: “The two major aspects in dealing with certification are the treatment of waste water and the use of nasty chemicals. However, very few farmers are using nasty chemicals. That is the good thing about the eco-labels. The farmers become aware that some of their practices are not good for the health of their family, the workers and the environment.”

“There are alternatives to berry borer such as traps. But stem borer can be a tough issue. It is also a reason for the shift from arabica to robusta,” Dr Vaast said.

Dr C.G. Kushalappa, Regional Co-ordinator of the India CAFNET project and Professor at the University of Agriculture Sciences, Ponnampet, Kodagu district, said: “There is low chemical usage in the Cauvery watershed zone, a robusta area. There is, however, a larger perception that environment and development cannot go together. We are trying to talk to farmers in this respect. We are perhaps better received than foreign NGOs working on the subject."

Coffee Board officials said: "It would not be correct to infer that arabicas are an impediment to certification, as both Rainforest Alliance and UTZ allow for qualified use of chemicals. Rainforest lays down critical and general conditions, where growers can be certified if he meets the former, with a provision for improvement."

Ms Joke Aerts, Projects Coordinator, Sustainable Agriculture, Rainforest Alliance, said, "The issues in India are recycling, waste management, water management, disposal of agro chemical containers and no burning of waste." Rainforest Alliance and UTZ have certified most of the area under sustainably produced coffee, the bulk of which is managed by the corporate sector.

Mr Shankar Raman of Nature Conservation Foundation said at a recent meet: "Pollination and yield increases with forest cover. Bee diversity improves the fruit set. Birds contribute to reduction of berry borer."

Date:21/12/2010 URL: http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/12/21/stories/2010122151041700.htm

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Back **Uptrend continues in sugar**

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Dec. 20

Sugar prices at spot, naka and tender delivery continued to rise for the fourth consecutive day by Rs 20-30 a quintal on the Vashi wholesale market.

On Monday, the rise in spot rates was limited to Rs 20 due to limited retail demand but at naka and mill tender level it shot up by Rs 30 on back of fresh demand by stockists and upcountry buyers.

Sugar prices in the other main producing State, Uttar Pradesh, are also ruling higher at over Rs 3,000 a quintal, supporting the bullish sentiment.

In the last four days in Mumbai, naka and mill tender rates have gone up by more than Rs 130 a quintal but in ready market they are lower Rs 100.

Arrival in the market was higher at 52-55 truckloads (100 kg each) and dispatches to local traders were at about 48-50 truckloads due to limited retail demand. The volume at the mill level continued to be higher on back of up-country buying. At the producing centres, a shortage of trucks is disrupting dispatches, curbing supply at the consuming centres, traders said.

Mr Harakhchand Vora of Kavita Trading Co said fundamentals are strong for sugar markets. Announcement of sugar exports by the Government and the price rise in petroleum products fuelled bullish sentiment.

Further restart of futures trading in sugar and the imminent rise in diesel price may give more room for price to rise. Freight rates may go up further from the current high levels. Sugar prices were higher in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat also.

On Saturday evening, 13-15 mills came forward with tender offer and sold about 90,000-95,000 bags in the range of Rs 2,910-2,950 for S–grade and Rs 2,940-3,000 a quintal for M–grade.

Eastern side buyers have covered about 7-8 rail rakes (about 27,000 bags each) from Maharashtra's mills in the range of Rs 2,900-2,935 for S–grade and Rs 2,935-2,975 for M–grade. Naka delivery volume was in the range of Rs 2,975-3,000 for S–grade and Rs 3,010-3,070 for M–grade. Fresh retail demand is expected from next week, he added.

According to the Bombay Sugar Merchants Association, spot sugar rates were: S–grade: Rs 2,980-3,021 (Rs 2,971-3,001) and M–grade: Rs 3,028-3,091 (Rs 2,981-3,071). Naka delivery rates were: S–grade: Rs 2,975-3,010 (Rs 2,950-3,000) and M–grade: Rs 3,010-3,070 (Rs 2,990-3,050).

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Back **Extension of export deadline boosts cotton**

Our Correspondent

Rajkot, Dec. 20

Cotton prices continued to rise across various markets on Monday as exporters tried to cover the needs and mills were also in fray.

On Friday, the Union Government said exports would continue until the permitted 55 lakh bales were shipped out of the country.

On Monday, prices increased Rs 700 to Rs 42,100-42,200 a candy (356 kg).

Cotton price at Rajkot was quoted on Rs 42,100-42,200 for a candy, compared with Friday price of Rs 41,500. Raw cotton was traded on Rs 900-930 a maund (of 20 kg), up by Rs 15 in Rajkot.

In Gondal, prices increased to Rs 900-930 a maund, up Rs 10 over Friday.

Mr Mahesh Patodia, a trader at Gondal market, said demand was heavy, leading to rise in prices.

Traders in Rajkot said that “Prices are increasing as mills are buying cotton more than exporters as they fear shortage of the material.”

A Rajkot-based trader said: “Price will move up more for coming 2 to 3 days and then it will be stabilise for some time.”

Mr Jaisukhbhai Patel, a trader at Gondal market, said arrivals were low compared with the demand.

“Arrivals are poor and the crop is feared to be low,” he said.

Meanwhile, the Cotton Association of India (CAI) has lowered its estimate for 2010-11 season (October-September) to 347.5 lakh bales against 357 lakh bales it forecast in October.

Gujarat, the largest cotton growing State in India is now estimated to produce 116 lakh bales, 4,00,000 bales short of the initial estimates.

About 70,000 bales of cotton arrive in Gujarat and 2.03 lakh bales arrive in India in a day.

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Back **Pakistan onions reach Amritsar**

High prices might continue till mid-January.

M.R. Subramani

Chennai, Dec. 20

Even as onion prices sky-rocket, onions from Pakistan have begun arriving in the country.

“Some 12-13 trucks (10 tonnes each) reached Amritsar from Pakistan through the Wagah border on Monday,” said Dr R.P. Gupta Director, National Horticultural Research and Development Foundation.

The onions are reported to have been imported at around Rs 3,500 a quintal.

“Traders in Mumbai too are importing 50 containers onion from Pakistan,” Dr Gupta said. Each container will bring in 25 tonnes of onion.

Floor price

Asked about the raising of minimum floor price for exports, Mr Madan Prakash, Executive Director of Chennai-based Rajathi group, said, “There is huge demand from Colombo. Sri

Lanka will find it difficult to source onions since imports from Pakistan could be as costly as from India. Malaysia, another importer, could turn to China for its needs,".

However, trade sources said the $1,200 a tonne export floor price cost and freight Gulf may not have much impact on the domestic price.

"We are witnessing a huge demand for quality onions within the country," said Mr Prakash.

Mr Jamanbhai, a trader at Gondal near Rajkot in Gujarat, said arrivals at Gondal were 1,000 bags (60 kg) now against 6,000-7,000 daily during the same time last year.

"The crop is lower. Rains have damaged it," he said.Consumers will have to live with high prices for onion. "I think buyers have realised that they have to do with the current prices," said Mr Rupesh Jaju, an exporter from Nashik."Prices are likely to rule at this level at least until the new crop hits the market in mid-January," said Mr Jamanbhai.

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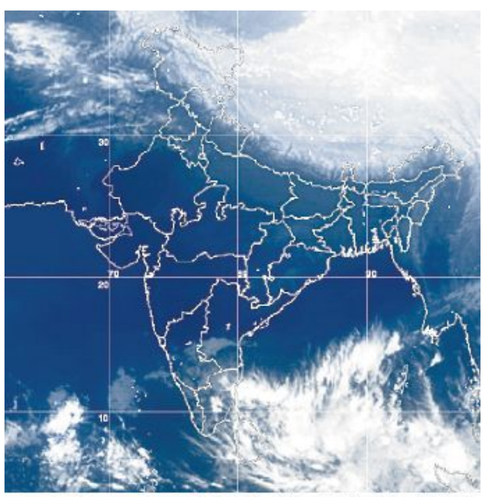
Back **Rainy New Year likely for north-west, central India**



India Meteorological Dept satellite picture at 16-00 hrs

Vinson Kurian

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 20

Dawn of the New Year may herald a burst of isolated to scattered showers over parts of northwest India and adjoining central India.

Interactive Rain

This will come about as a westerly system digs in deep to the south across the northwest Gujarat-southwest Rajasthan early next week.

Interaction of the westerlies and the monsoon easterlies across the peninsula is shown as setting off a trail of rains from this region propagating in a north-northeast direction.

The whole of the peninsular west, most of central India and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar expected to slip under a wet cover during the course of the period, according to international models.

Coincidentally, this would also be the time around when a likely low-pressure area/depression in the Bay of Bengal could hit north Sri Lanka and southeast coast of Tamil Nadu in the immediate neighbourhood, these models aver.

Easterly Wave

The system is expected to break away from a concurrent easterly wave, one of which is already affecting southern peninsular India, an update by India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Monday. During the 24 hours ending Monday morning, the prevailing easterly wave brought fairly widespread rainfall over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, while it was scattered over Tamil Nadu.

Mercury Falls

An INSAT imagery in the afternoon showed the presence of rain-bearing clouds over parts of Nicobar Islands, South Bay of Bengal, Southeast Arabian Sea and South Andaman Sea.

Meanwhile, northwest India is expected to come under the influence of passing western disturbances as early as from this Wednesday.

An IMD outlook on Monday said that a feeble western disturbance may affect the western Himalayan region on Wednesday and Thursday.

Cool northwesterly winds are currently blowing across the Indo-Gangetic plains. Minimum temperatures have fallen by 1 to 2 deg Celsius over some parts of northwest and central India over the past 24 hours.

The lowest minimum recorded overnight in the plains of northwest India has dipped relative to the previous day to 0.6 deg Celsius at Adampur in Punjab.

Frost Watch

A weather warning issued by the IMD retained the outlook for night temperatures to probe 4 deg Celsius and even lower.

This could trigger ground frost in isolated pockets of Punjab, Haryana, west Uttar Pradesh and north Rajasthan during the nights of Tuesday and Wednesday.

No significant change in minimum temperatures is expected over northwest and central India on Tuesday and Wednesday, given the calming influence of an incoming western disturbance.

But mist or shallow fog may over parts of Punjab, Haryana, north Rajasthan, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the early morning hours thanks to the moisture feed embedded in the westerly system.

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Back **James Jacob to head plantations body**

Kottayam, Dec. 20

Dr James Jacob, Director, Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII), has been elected

President of Indian Society for Plantation Crops (ISPC) at its 10th general body meeting held at RRII. Established in 1971, the ISPC is a professional body of scientists, extension officers, farmers and others who have an interest in plantation crops. It has a membership of over 600. Its activities include publication of Journal of Plantation Crops, holding national and international symposia, encouraging research in the sector and awarding fellowships to students pursuing research. Dr James Jacob is also the Vice-Chairman of International Rubber Research and Development Board (IRRDB).

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Back **Soya steady despite subdued buying**

Our Correspondent

Indore, Dec 20

Soyabean prices at the Indore mandi ruled stable on subdued buying interest. Market for soyabean has continued to remain steady for the past few days because of delay and decline in soyameal exports.

Arrival of soyabean in Madhya Pradesh mandis were about two lakh bags, while Indore mandis witnessed an arrival of 6,500 bags quoting Rs 2,090-2,140.

On subdued buying interest, plant deliveries of soyabean also remained steady at Rs 2,185-2,210 a quintal. On the National Commodities and Derivatives exchange, soyabean prices edged lower on weak global cues. Soyabean January and February contracts on the NCDEX closed lower at Rs 2,260 (down Rs 8.5) and Rs 2,320 (down Rs 13). Soyameal also continued to remain steady. On Monday also, soyameal quoted at Rs 17,800a tonne, in Indore it quoted at Rs 16,500-16,700.

Soya oil futures at the NBOT edged lower. Soya oil January contract at NBOT closed down at Rs 588.90, after opening at Rs 590.70.

On Saturday, soya oil January contract had closed on a positive note at Rs 591.60 after opening at Rs 590. On the NCEDX also, soya oil futures traded lower with its January contract closing at Rs 591.75 after opening at Rs 594.

However, soya oil prices gained marginally in the spot notwithstanding decline in soya oil futures. On the spot, soya refined prices gained marginally at Rs 545-547 for 10 kg, while in the resale, it was quoted at Rs 540-542.

Similarly, soya solvent also saw a marginal gain on slightly improved demand. In the spot, soya solvent quoted at Rs 510, while in delivery, it was quoted at Rs 514 for 10 kg

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Back **Demand hopes perk up groundnut oil**

Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Dec. 20

A mixed trend was witnessed on the edible oil markets on Monday in line with the steady sentiment at Malaysian markets.

Poor local demand kept prices steady in groundnut, soya oil and palmolein. Sunflower expeller refined oil shot up by Rs 15 but sunflower refined oil was unchanged. Rapeseed oil declined Rs 9 and cotton oil fell Rs 2 per 10 kg.

Low volume

The volume of trade was very thin. The undertone of the market was bearish. In Rajkot market, groundnut oil firm up marginally on expectation of fresh demand.

At the local level, resale selling pressure and month-end poor demand weighed on the sentiment.

In Mumbai market, trade volume was about 200/250 tonnes, said traders.

Crude palm oil futures on Malaysia's derivatives exchange witnessed both side movements with marginal rise at closing.

Initially, Jan-Feb futures fell , then recovered on speculative buying. At Rajkot, groundnut oil prices were up by Rs 5 at Rs 1,140 a tin and Rs 735 for a 10 kg.

Malaysia's BMD and NBOT futures: Malaysia's BMD CPO futures closed higher with January at MYR 3,575 (3,570), February at MYR 3,562 (3,547) MYR. Indore NBOT soya oil futures January closed at Rs 589 (Rs 591.80).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rate (Rs/10kg): Groundnut oil 765 (765), soya refined oil 568 (568), sunflower exp. ref. 675 (660), sunflower ref. 715 (715), rapeseed ref. oil 603 (612), rapeseed expeller ref. 573 (582), cotton ref. oil 563 (565) and palmolein 555 (555).

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Back **Turmeric falls on poor end-of-season demand**

Our Correspondent

Erode, Dec. 20

Due to low demand for spot turmeric, prices declined by Rs 300-400 a quintal on Monday. Though arrivals were moderate , sales were poor. Out of 3,400 bags that arrived, 1,750 were sold.

“In futures trade, the prices quoted were below Rs 14,000 a quintal, which was reflected in spot turmeric sales. Bulk buyers quoted lower prices on Monday,” a trader said.

“As the season is coming to an end, most bulk buyers will buy less. They have opted not to hold the stock, as they feel that in the coming year, prices will not touch Rs 15,000 or Rs 16,000 at the beginning,” he said. Hence, buyers purchased turmeric based on demand.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants' Association sales yard, the finger variety was sold at Rs 9,109-15,839 a quintal. The root variety was sold at Rs 9,109-15,765 a quintal. Out of

1,348 bags that arrived, 517 were sold.

At the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Marketing Society, the finger variety fetched Rs 15,627-16,166 a quintal, the root variety fetched Rs 15,120-16,127 a quintal. Only 54 bags, out of 196 bags that arrived, were sold.

At the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 15,689-16,291 a quintal, the root variety at Rs 15,614-16,070. Out of 822 bags that arrived, 527 were sold.

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Back **Basmati paddy arrivals drop sharply**

Our Correspondent

Karnal, Dec. 20

Arrivals of pure basmati paddy dropped drastically to around 2,000 bagsagainst the arrivals of 5,000 bags till last weekend. Following lower prices offered by millers, farmers were not interested in bringing their produce to the market.

On Monday, farmers were ready to sell at Rs 2,000 a quintal, whereas the millers offered Rs 1,850. After a long negotiation, the stock remained unsold.

Mr Tara Chand Sharma, a paddy and rice trader, told Business Line that rice millers are not paying fair prices for the pure basmati paddy. Following this, arrivals of pure paddy have dropped whereas the arrivals of other varieties have gone up. In the rice market, trade continued to witness low buying. Prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice were unchanged. Pusa-1121 steam (new) ruled at around Rs 5,250 a quintal, while the old variety sold around Rs 5,300. Pusa-1121 sela (new) was at Rs 4,150-4,200, old variety at Rs 4,300-4,350. Pusa-1121 raw (new) ruled between Rs 5,050 and Rs 5,150, old variety quoted around Rs 5,250. Pusa (sela) ruled at Rs 3,200-3,250 and Pusa (raw) Rs 4,200.

Basmati sela quoted at Rs 6,000-6,100, basmati raw Rs 7,000-7,100. Brokens such as

Tibar was at Rs 3,100-3,200, Dubar Rs 2,300 and Mongra Rs 2,000-2,100. Permal sela ruled at Rs 2,000-2,200, Permal steam 2,200 a quintal.

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Back **Better prospects**

Ritu Raj Konwar

Better harvest seen:Farmers load harvested paddy onto a bullock cart in Mayong village of Morigaon district, Assam, on Monday. Farmers throughout North-East are expecting high yield of paddy due to sufficient rain this year. Harvesting began in mid-November and will continue till the end of December in the North-East.

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Back **Spot rubber stretches to new high**

Our Correspondent

Kottayam, Dec. 20

The rubber market explored record highs on Monday. On the spot, prices moved up sharply reacting to the gains in the international indices. There were no quantity sellers even during closing hours and the market made all-round gains on fresh buying and short covering.

According to traders, sheet rubber flared up to Rs 207 (Rs 203) a kg, breaking the previous record closing of Rs 206 a kg in late trades.

The grade improved to Rs 206 (Rs 203) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board.

Incessant rains across Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia, have disrupted tapping by the top three producers and lowered the output amidst increasing demand from rising car sales in China and India.

The short supply is expected to worsen as the low-production season starts early next year in Thailand.

Meanwhile, key Tokyo rubber futures scaled a record high during the morning trade in Tokyo supported by strong gains in Shanghai futures and supply concerns in major producing countries.

In domestic futures, the January series firmed up to Rs 212.45 (208.62), February to Rs 216.87 (212.37), March to Rs 221.00 (215.46) and April to Rs 225.50 (219.47) per kg for RSS 4 on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

The volumes totalled 8,098 lots and open interest 7,195 lots. The turnover was Rs 174.03 crore. The December futures firmed up sharply to ¥398.1 (Rs 215.84) from ¥389 a kg for RSS 3 during the day session and then to ¥402 (Rs 217.96) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange (TOCOM).

RSS 3 (spot) increased to Rs 217.45 (213.75) a kg at Bangkok.

The spot rubber rates per kg were: RSS-4: 207 (203); RSS-5: 201 (197); Ungraded: 197 (193); ISNR 20: 201 (197); and Latex 60%: 134 (131).

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Back New crop may mash potato prices by Rs 100/quintal

Shobha Roy

Kolkata, Dec. 20 Potato prices, especially in West Bengal, are likely to drop by about Rs 100/quintal as the new crop of the tuber is due to arrive in the market next week.

The wholesale price of the crop (Jyoti variety), currently hovering around Rs 540/quintal, is likely to drop to about Rs 400-440/quintal next week, according to Mr Patit Paban De, Past President, West Bengal Cold Storage Association.

Prices have already dropped by about Rs 50/quintal from Rs 580-600 a quintal during the first week of December. “New crop of potato has already arrived in Bihar, Assam and Jharkhand thereby bringing down the export of potatoes from Bengal to these states significantly. This has caused the prices to crash to some extent,” Mr De told Business Line.

The prices were likely to crash further on account of the new crop in Bengal from districts such as Bankura early next week, he said. “Potato prices in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has already dropped to about Rs 400 a quintal on account of the arrival of the new crop, prices in Bengal will also crash by early next week,” he added.

Areas under potato, which was estimated to be lower by about five per cent this year, vis-à-vis last year on account of poor rainfall, has however, picked up and was almost at par with last year. Area under potato cultivation was expected to be lower due to lower sowing of the tuber in districts such as Bankura, Midnapore, Purulia and Nadia due to poor rainfall.

“This has been made good by the higher sowing in Barddhaman district where boro paddy cultivation has been curtailed to some extent thereby encouraging farmers to grow potatoes on that land as well,” he said.

It was however, difficult to ascertain the exact production of the crop at present.

“Cultivation will go on for few more days post which the harvesting will begin. Only once the harvesting begins will we be able to ascertain the exact production of potatoes,” he said.

Production this year may not be at par with last year. “Last year, we had a bumper crop. Production is primarily dependent on the weather, if the winter duration is good this year then we can expect the production to be good as well,” he added.

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Back **Prices rule firm at Kochi tea auction**

Our Bureau

Kochi Dec. 20

Arrivals continued to be higher as Kochi tea auction clocked 11,90,000 kg at the dust and 3,18,000 kg at the leaf auction.

With good buying support, prices of most grades continued to remain firm. The CTC dust auction remained dearer with buyers pursuing better quality.

The teas, which appreciated last week, alone witnessed a correction this week.

AVT and Hindustan Unilever continued to be active along with Kerala State Civil Supplies Corporation and Tata Global.

Exporters operated on medium/plain and bold grades. Upcountry buyers lent fair amount of support.

At the orthodox dust auction, primary grades quoted higher while other remained steady to dearer. HUL was active at the orthodox dust counter.

Leaf Auction

Good liquoring Nilgiri bolder broken and fannings remained firm to dearer at the orthodox leaf auction.

Medium and whole leaf grades were the strong feature of the market. Bolder broken, smaller broken and fannings quoted around last weeks' levels.

Strong demand was evident from HUL and traditional exporters. Exporters to Tunisia and Russia remained active on medium grades. Good grades appreciated in value at the CTC leaf auction while others remained barely steady. Exporters were also active.

Corsley BOPD fetched the top price at the dust auction at Rs 145 followed by Corsely FBOPD at Rs 140, Pasuparai RD at Rs 135 and Pasuparai SRD at Rs 129.

At the leaf auction, Pascoes Green tea fetched the top price at Rs 311 followed by Grahamsland Pekoe at Rs 213, Chamraj OP at Rs 202 and Glendale FP at Rs 200.