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## Supreme Court to Centre: enough is enough, no more wastage of grain

J. Venkatesan

*Ensure proper distribution to targeted PDS beneficiaries*

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*“Assuming that 7,000 tonnes is correct figure for wastage, how can you allow this to happen?”*

*“If it is not fit for human consumption we do not suggest that it should be given to the people”*

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New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday wanted the Centre to ensure that there was no further wastage of foodgrains and that there was proper distribution to the targeted beneficiaries.

Justice Dalveer Bhandari, hearing a Public Interest Litigation petition on streamlining the Public Distribution System, told Additional Solicitor-General Mohan Parasaran, who said the wastage was 7,000 tonnes and not 70,000 tonnes: “Enough is enough. We don't want further wastage.” When the ASG said, “the figure should be 0.07 lakh tonne, instead of 0.70 lakh tonnes,” Justice Bhandari said: “Let us not go by percentage when the full figure is available for the two States of Punjab and Haryana, viz. 67,539 tonnes.”

Justice Deepak Verma, the other judge on the Bench, said: “Even assuming that 7,000

tonnes is correct, it is a huge waste. How can you allow this to happen?"

Pending for decade

Justice Bhandari said: "This matter has pending for almost a decade now. When people are dying of hunger, you [Centre] must have done some evaluation by comparing the percentage of waste the world over. It is an extremely serious matter. You have a buffer stock. The kharif crop is due to come from October. The damage done in [the] two States is very high. What action have you taken against the officials responsible for the wastage? Whatever that is likely to go waste at least that must not go waste. Ensure that it is properly distributed."

When the ASG said "the foodgrains did not become waste as they have been destroyed," Justice Bhandari made it clear: "If it is not fit for human consumption we do not suggest that it should be given to them [people]. It should not be given even to animals."

When Justice Verma wanted to know whether the government could supply foodgrains to all below the poverty line beneficiaries, the ASG said: "The Centre has supplied foodgrains to each State based on the BPL families. In some States the figures are at variance." If identification of the BPL families by the States conformed to the Centre's norms, there would not be any difficulty in supply.

"On the basis of the revised poverty estimates based on the March 2009 population, the number of BPL families comes to 5.90 crore, which is less than the existing coverage of 6.52 crore BPL families. However, the government has continued with the earlier poverty estimates so that allocation of foodgrains could be made to larger BPL families," Mr. Parasaran said.

Senior counsel Colin Gonsalves, appearing for the People's Union for Civil Liberties, said that at present there was a buffer stock of 22 million tonnes and an additional 33 million tonnes of foodgrains was in godowns. He wanted to know why the Centre had allocated only 2.5 million tonnes for the PDS. Arguments will continue on Tuesday.

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## **Water released**

Staff Reporter

THENI: Water has been released through P.T.R. Rajan and Thanthai Periyar canals to irrigate single cropping areas in both wet and dry lands in Cumbum valley, said Collector P. Muthuveeran.

Releasing water from the channel at Vaikalpatti village near Uthamapalayam on Sunday, he said that 5,146 acres – 468 acres of wet lands and 4,678 acres of dry lands would be benefited. To maintain supply in these channels, 100 cusecs of water has been released from Periyar Dam, in addition to regular release for irrigation of 45,000 acres of land.

With the release of water, 830 acres in Uthamapalayam block and 4,316 acres in Theni block would be benefited. Water would be supplied continuously for the next 120 days, he assured. If there were failure of monsoon and sharp slump in storage in Periyar Dam in future, water would not be released. Farmers in Chinnamanur, Seelayampatti, Veppampatti, Seepalakottai, Poomalaigundu, Dharmapuri, Thadicherry, Venkatachalapuram, Koduvilarpatti, Jangalpatti, Govindhanagaram and Balakrishnapuram would be benefited. The release cheered agriculture labourers because they would get jobs for next four months.

The State Government had issued order for release of water from the dam on Thursday. Water would be released from Manjalar and Sothuparai Dams on Monday morning.

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## **Efforts on to introduce new cultivation method**

Special Correspondent

NAMAKKAL: To increase the yield, the Namakkal district Agriculture department has undertaken concerted efforts to introduce the Raja Rajan 1000 method of rice cultivation on 1,500 hectares in Kolli Hills where traditional method of cultivation is being pursued. To create awareness among farmers, an exhibition on Raja Rajan 1000 method of paddy cultivation was organised in Sengarai village during the Mass Contact Programme.

Collector S. Madhumathi participated.

Application of organic fertilizers, method of raising nursery, planting of seedlings by using Marker device and application of cona weeders were explained.

The Collector also interacted with the farmers.

Later on the field, a paddy nursery had been raised in front of the other paddy growing farmers.

Yield

“In the hill tracts, the farmers have been registering less than 2,000 kg yield an acre. But by the Raja Rajan 1000 method, they could get more than 3,000 kg an acre,” said S. Sivaraj Joint Director of Agriculture, Namakkal.

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**'Do not use cultivable land for other purposes'**

Special Correspondent

TIRUVARUR: Farmers should not use cultivable lands for other purposes like real estates said M.Chandrasekaran, Collector, here recently.

Speaking at the World Food day celebration organised by agriculture and civil supplies departments and consumer organisations on October 16, the Collector said farmers

should increase agriculture production by using new technologies suggested by agriculture department. They should also contribute to environment protection by not using plastics.

World Food Day is observed to mark the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organisation by the United Nations after the world wars. It was started to overcome the destruction by the two world wars and ensure food security.

In Tamil Nadu hunger has been completely eradicated now through government schemes. The effort should be sustained, the Collector said. M.Thangavel, DRO and T.Thyagarajan, Senior Regional Manager, Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC), participated .

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### **Haryana procures 9.69 lakh metric tonnes of paddy**

Special Correspondent

CHANDIGARH: The six government procuring agencies have so far purchased 9.69 lakh metric tonnes of paddy in Haryana out of the total arrival of 11.07 lakh metric tonnes in the agricultural markets, Food and Supplies Minister Mahender Partap Singh said here on Monday. The agencies have also procured 0.48 lakh metric tonnes of bajra of the total arrival of 0.64 lakh metric tonnes in the mandis. The remaining had been purchased by the dealers.

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### **Punjab model has proved ruinous, say farmers, activists**

Vinaya Deshpande

*"State suffered only debt, illnesses and polluted water sources"*

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*'Not true that organic farming brings down yield'*

*Consumers asked to promote non-toxic food*

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MUMBAI: Appealing to the farmers and policy-makers not to emulate the Punjab model of Green Revolution, some farmers from Punjab said here over the weekend that the revolution had completely ruined the State. "Punjab is now called the cancer capital of India. The Green Revolution has given farmers only three things: debt, serious illnesses and polluted and scanty water sources," said Balwinder Singh, a farmer, while talking to reporters during the Kisan Swaraj Yatra which reached Mumbai this past weekend.

"The Chief Minister now says that the government will fit RO [reverse osmosis water-filtering process] in every village. But what will happen to the cattle and other animals that drink from the contaminated water source? They are all going to end up in our stomachs. Jo barbaadi ki hai, wo wapas hamare paas ayegi hi ayegi [whatever we have ruined will come back to us]," he said.

Farmers and activists opposed the Eastern India Green Revolution project introduced by the Central government.

"Even the Planning Commission has acknowledged the negative evidence in Punjab like high toxicity levels and reduced production. Why does the government still want to invest Rs.400 crore in such a project?" asked Saroj Mohanty, a seed breeder, farmer and activist from Orissa.

Activists raised concerns about the skewed investment in agriculture, use of pesticides, genetically-modified crops.

"After more than six decades of Independence, 66 per cent of agricultural land in the country has no irrigation facility. The government doesn't invest in the breeding skills of the farmers. It doesn't encourage successful models of sustainable and high-yield agriculture," said Kavitha Kuruganti, an activist of the Kheti Virasat Mission.

The activists said the government policy envisioned only 6-15 per cent of the country's population to depend on agriculture. "Where will the rest of the agriculture-dependent population go? Will we be able to create opportunities for them elsewhere?"

"It seems like the government is purposely trying to make farming so unviable that people want to leave it or commit suicide," said Aarti Pankharaj.

The activists said the absolute number of farmers who will be displaced will be in millions. "It will be the largest displacement. It is a civilisational debate now. Do we accept the larger development paradigm where farmers are being pushed out of rural agriculture?" Ms. Kuruganti said.

With reference to more than two lakh farmers' suicides in the country in the past 15 years, she said that there were also many farmers who had in fact successfully shown there was hope. "The community-managed sustainable agriculture project being run on 28 lakh acres in Andhra Pradesh is the best example in this case. This NPM [Non-Pesticidal Management of crops] is the world's largest State-supported project and is mainly run by women farmers. Their yields have improved tremendously. It is not true that organic farming brings down the yield."

"Win-win" situation

She said the government should boost such role models and give them wide publicity so that more farmers move to the "win-win" situation. "Only the big corporates will face losses if this is done. We will be able to achieve food sustainability, non-toxic food supply and seed sovereignty," she said.

The 71-day yatra plans to engage urban consumers, legislators, administrators, local self-governments and farmers. It will travel 15,000 km through 20 States before reaching Rajghat on December 11.

The activists appealed to the urban consumers to act in enlightened self-interest to promote non-toxic food on their platters.

The rally for "food, farmers and freedom" saw the support of famous film personalities such

as Mahesh Bhatt, Rakeysh Mehra and Atul Kulkarni and freedom fighters such as Shanti Patel and G.G. Parikh.

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## **Horticulture farm planned inside jail**

Rajesh B. Nair

PUDUCHERRY: The Prison Department has planned to develop more than one acre of land inside the jail for cultivating vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers to keep prisoners engaged in more productive and meaningful work.

This is in addition to the small area already under cultivation for vegetables, which caters partially for food requirement of the inmates.

The Puducherry Agro Service and Industries Corporation had prepared a project proposal. The department was awaiting government approval to go ahead with the project, Inspector-General of Police (Prisons) Pankaj Kumar Jha told The Hindu.

PASIC, in its proposal, suggested cultivation of vegetables and fruits in one acre and cultivation of herbal plants and flowers in 2,000 square feet each.

The estimated cost for establishing the farm would be around Rs 15 lakhs, an official of PASIC said.

An overhead tank would be provided to store water for irrigating the land. The used water would be treated and stored, the PASIC official said, adding that the jail authorities planned to set up a separate treatment plant.

At present, the prison cultivated banana, beans, brinjal and chilli, which were used for cooking food for the inmates. The prison had produced 265 kg of vegetables till March this year, a jail official told The Hindu.



With more job opportunities available to prisoners inside the jail, the authorities had set up a committee to revise wages for the inmates.

Besides vegetable cultivation, the prison had got a fully functional mat making and spinning unit. A total of 70 mats were made for in-house use till April this year.

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## **Gehlot to Pawar: Instruct FCI to buy bajra from State**

Special Correspondent

JAIPUR: Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Monday asked Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to instruct the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to buy pearl millet (bajra) from the State's farmers at the minimum support price (MSP).

The millet crop this time would be bumper due to the good rain the State received and timely procurement of the produce would help to ensure remunerative prices to farmers, he told Mr. Pawar, who is in the capital to address a meeting of Agriculture Ministers on Tuesday.

Mr.Gehlot, who met Mr. Pawar during the day, informed the latter that the State was expecting 45 lakh tonnes of bajra production this season. As the availability of bajra was more, the prevailing market rate was between Rs.700-750 per quintal, much less than the MSP of Rs.880. He offered all support from the State Government to the FCI for the procurement of the produce from the farmers. "An early decision in this regard would protect the interest of the farmers," the Chief Minister said.

Mr.Gehlot briefed the Union Minister on the compensation paid to small and marginal farmers in the form of subsidy this year for the crop damages. For the first time an amount of Rs.750 crore was distributed to farmers in this manner with the support of the Centre, he informed. "This came as a major relief to farmers here," he said and added that the free distribution of the seeds of maize and millet to farmers too was great help.

The Chief Minister requested Mr.Pawar to make available five railway rakes daily for bringing urea and DAP to the State so that the availability of fertilizers on time could be ensured. At present only one rake was available for the purpose, he noted.

Mr.Gehlot sought holding of annual meeting of Ministers of Animal Husbandry of States in Rajasthan, the most live-stock rich State. He also solicited more funds to the State's agriculture universities in Bikaner and Udaipur for strengthening research.

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**Press Trust Of India**

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### **PM's panel sees inflation down to 6.5% by Dec**

The Prime Minister's economic panel on Sunday said inflation is likely to fall to 6.5 per cent by December from the "uncomfortably high" 8.6 per cent due steps taken by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the expected fall in food prices on the back of good monsoons.

"Our own expectation is (that) by December the inflation rate would come to 6.5 per cent," said C. Rangarajan, chairman, Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council (PMEAC).

The RBI may need to raise rates yet again in its quarterly policy on November 2 to tame high inflation, Rangarajan said.

The RBI has raised key policy rates five times so far this year. The rate of price rise in September was 8.62 per cent, up from 8.51 per cent in August.

"The inflation is at a uncomfortably high level. So continued actions on the part of RBI may be needed."

Prices of vegetables and fruits, which are contributing substantially to food inflation, are likely to fall in November and December as there is usually a seasonal decline in the prices of these commodities.

Food inflation rose marginally to 16.37 per cent for the week ended October 2, from 16.24 per cent in the previous week on the back of higher prices of fruits, select vegetables and milk.

## Business Standard

Tuesday, Oct 19, 2010

### **Groundnut yield in Gujarat seen up by 35 %**

**Vimukt Dave / Mumbai/ Rajkot October 19, 2010, 0:58 IST**

In the wake of favourable weather conditions coupled with sufficient rainfall, groundnut yield in Gujarat is estimated to rise by 35 per cent at 1,120 kg per hectare this year. Higher yield is all set to push up groundnut output by 5 lakh tonnes.

As per the survey conducted by The Solvent Extractors Association (SEA) of India, Gujarat is likely to witness groundnut yield of around 1,120 kg per hectare, which shows a jump of 35 percent over 830 kg per hectare last year.

On the back of higher yield, SEA estimates groundnut production in Gujarat to increase by 5 lakh tonnes to 18.70 lakh tonnes in 2010-11.

Junagadh is poised to see the highest yield at 1,375 kg per hectare, which was 1,000 kg last year. However, groundnut yield in Amreli is projected to be the lowest at 700 kg per hectare this year. Still, it will be higher than the last year's yield of 500 kg per hectare. Groundnut yield in the district took a hit due to heavy rains during monsoon.

"Initially, industry players were expecting groundnut production of 22-23 lakh tonnes but later on revised their estimates as heavy rainfall in Porbandar and Jamnagar districts damaged groundnut crop and yield in these regions. Still, production is likely to be higher than last year," said BV Mehta, executive director, SEA.

According to SEA report, around 20 per cent area under groundnut crop in Porbandar district was washed away by heavy rains, while the remaining area has seen groundnut yield taking a hit. The average yield in this district may hover around 750 kg per hectare against 1,060 kg per hectare last year.

### **Veg oil inventory up 8.7% in a month**

**BS Reporter / Mumbai October 19, 2010, 0:55 IST**

Vegetable oil inventory, at various ports and in pipeline, jumped 8.7 per cent in the last one month, due to sporadic rise in domestic crushing and imports.



Data compiled by the Mumbai-based trade body, Solvent Extractors' Association (SEA), showed the total inventory rose to 1.5 million tonnes (mt) as on October 1, compared with 1.38 mt on September 1. The current stock of edible oils at various ports as on October 1 was estimated at 790,000 tonnes (crude palm oil 420,000 tonnes, RBD palmolein 70,000 tonnes, degummed soybean oil 225,000 tonnes, crude sunflowerseed oil 72,000 tonnes and cotton oil 3,000 tonnes) and 710,000 tonnes in the pipeline.

In the last two months, domestic production of vegetable oil rose significantly, due to an increase in processing of soybean seed and rapeseed. Also, imports surged tremendously during the period.

Vegetable oil imports rose a marginal six per cent in September due to rising demand from consumer industries. Imports during September were 960,752 tonnes, compared with 905,192 tonnes in the corresponding period last year. Overall imports during November 2009-September 2010 were 8.41 mt, compared with 7.98 mt in the year-ago period, registering an increase of five per cent.

During November 2009-September 2010, RBD palmolein imports were 1.08 mt as against 1.15 mt in the year-ago period. Palm oil imports reduced to 5.88 mt as compared to 5.99 mt during the same period last year.

The narrow price difference between crude palm oil and soybean oil (SBO) prevailed in the last few months, encouraging larger import of SBO in recent months. Non-edible oil imports in September were 18,495 tonnes as against 40,296 tonnes during the corresponding period last year. Overall imports of non-edible oil during November 2009-September 2010 declined 10 per cent to 365,910 tonnes compared with 407,389 tonnes during the same period last year. The rupee appreciation in the last three months also supported the import of vegetable oils, which is evident from the table of average imported edible oil prices.

### **Pawar backs demand for free sugar exports**

**Sanjay Jog / Mumbai October 19, 2010, 0:51 IST**

Agriculture and Food Minister Sharad Pawar has supported sugar farmers and mill owners who want sugar exports to be brought under open general license (OGL).



Pawar said time was ripe for this with global sugar prices around \$693 a tonne and domestic sugar production estimated at 25 million tonnes. He said he would ignore the opposition to exports and take a decision.

“Sugar prices in the global market are quite high and this is the right time for exports. I am of the view that cane farmers and mills should benefit from high prices,” he told Business Standard, adding the decision would be taken at an appropriate time.

The Centre has allowed advanced license export obligation of about one million tonnes for exports. Exports under OGL were banned in February 2009 in the wake of a fall in sugar output to 14.7 million tonnes in 2008-09. The 2009-10 output was 19 million tonnes.

Following a rise in sugar production this season, the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar and the Indian Sugar Mills Association have repeatedly sought permission for exports.

Mills said there was a mismatch of around Rs 250 a quintal between the production cost and the selling price. The realisation is estimated at Rs 2,450 a quintal while the production cost is Rs 2,700 per quintal. They say pressure on them will be eased if they are allowed to export.

Pawar said he faced opposition when he allowed cotton exports. Those who opposed cotton exports argued that cotton mills would be forced to buy at higher prices. “However, due to cotton exports, farmers benefited and got Rs 4,200 a quintal,” he said.

The Union minister told millers to become more professional in carrying out operations while addressing a gathering in Ahmadnagar district. He had hinted that the time had come for sugar decontrol and millers should be ready to face global competition.

**Despite higher output, prices to stay firm**

**Komal Amit Gera / Chandigarh October 19, 2010, 0:49 IST**

Rising export demand has been a major factor keeping cotton prices high.

The country’s cotton output this year is expected to be 32.5 million bales (170 kg to a bale), a tenth more than last year, despite yields being affected in the north.

Prices are already higher than last year, despite the government's efforts to restrict exports. With higher demand at home and abroad, they're expected to rise further.

The yield is expected to be lower in Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. The yield in the Bathinda belt is about 20 quintals per hectare, as compared to 25-30 quintals per hectare last year. The fall of about 25 per cent is reflecting in mandi arrivals.

The yield has been effected due to the leaf curl virus that stunts growth of the cotton flower, explains Jagtar Singh Mehma, a farmer from Bathinda.



The loss can be covered by the better yield expected in Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra. The southern states are likely to record an average yield of 20 qtls per hectare, which is good considering water availability in the region. The average yield is higher in the north due to the network of canals there.

### Area

The area under cotton this rabi season is projected at 10.8 million hectares (m ha) to 11 m ha, as compared to 10.3 m ha last year. It fell in Haryana and Rajasthan and was stagnant in Punjab.

A fall of about 12 per cent is projected in Rajasthan and Haryana (this is percentage of the total area under cotton in the specified state), say scientists at the Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar.

However, the area has risen in Andhra by 12 per cent, Maharashtra by 11 per cent and in Gujarat by five to six per cent.

Around 90 per cent of the crop sown in the past two years has been genetically modified cotton. The output this year, state-wise, is expected to be (in million bales), Punjab 1.65, Haryana 1.4, Andhra 6.5, Maharashtra 7.7, Gujarat 10.7.

### BOOM TIME

	Trend	2009-10	2010-11	Expectation
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Cotton yield	Crop effected by leaf curl virus in north, good crop in other parts	25-30 qtl/hectare in north 18-20 qtl/hectare in south	20-22 qtl/hectare in north Over 20 qtl/hectare in south	Loss in northern states likely to be covered by gain in southern states
Area under cotton	Increase in net sown area	10.3 million hectares	10.8-11 million hectares	Rise in acreage to give better crop
Outlook for total output	Target likely to be achieved	29.5 million bales	32.5 million bales	Better volume than last year
Price	Consistent price revision	Rs 28,000 per candy	Rs 40,000 per candy	Likely to touch Rs 43,000 per candy
Exports		8.5 million bales	5.5 million bales	Target expected to be revised if production crosses 32.5 million bales

## Prices

The exceptionally high demand in the international market and consistent demand at home have meant rising prices. In the past five weeks, prices have risen 25-30 per cent.

Cotton's market price is Rs 41,000 per candy (356 kg), likely to rise further. The unprecedented rise in the price has diminished the role of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI), which had a target of buying a tenth of the arrivals. A CCI official said the corporation had been doing only token buying.

Rising export demand has been a major factor keeping prices high, despite the higher crop. The government had opened registration for up to 5.5 million bales for exports. Permission for four million has been issued till date.

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**Back Bumper output may cause foodgrain glut: Rosaiah**

*Govt seeks more storage space, free movement of rice.*



Mr K. Rosaiah

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Oct. 18

With Andhra Pradesh poised to register a record foodgrain output of about 207 lakh tonnes, potentially resulting in a glut in the market, it plans to seek the Centre's support for more storage space and free movement of rice.

The State Government will present a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, seeking Centre's assistance in ensuring that farmers do not get affected by lack of takers due to shortage of godown space.

The State is considering the prospect of allowing export of foodgrain with a cap of about 25 per cent of the produce, according to the State Chief Minister, Mr K. Rosaiah.

The rice millers association in the State has been protesting seeking Government permission to export part of the foodgrain produce.

This was earlier banned as the prices of rice had shot up. They have refused to pick up fresh stocks from market yards.

Addressing a press conference on Monday, Mr Rosaiah said the bountiful monsoon is

poised to result in a record foodgrain output of 207 lakh tonnes, during kharif and rabi crop seasons. This could mean total rice output of about 148 lakh tonnes, which is significantly higher than what the storage space can potentially accommodate.

The storage space of all facilities, including that of the Food Corporation of India, Central Warehousing Corporation and other State agencies, are simply inadequate to tackle such a foodgrain output. "We have been representing with the Centre and FCI for additional godown space and have been pleading with the FCI and Railways to help evacuate more stocks," he said.

However, all these measures are proving to be inadequate. Therefore, the State plans to submit a memorandum to the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, the Chief Minister explained.

The State Government is pursuing with the Railway authorities to see that about seven rakes are deployed which would help evacuate more foodgrain from the market yards.

Given this backdrop, the State could consider allowing export of foodgrains, particularly rice to other parts of the country. A meeting of all political parties has been convened to take this issue further, he said.

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**Back Maharashtra mills to pay 23% more for cane harvesting**

*Increase reflective of tightening of farm labour markets.*

Harish Damodaran

New Delhi, Oct. 18

Sugar mills in Maharashtra have agreed to a 23 per cent wage increase for cane harvesting labourers during the 2010-11 crushing season (October-September).

"Last season, we were paying Rs 111 a tonne as harvesting charge, which was uniformly

applicable across the State. This time, we have settled for a 23 per cent raise with the cane cutters' unions," said Mr Prakash Naiknavare, Managing Director, Maharashtra State Cooperative Sugar Factories Federation Ltd.

Can't compare rates

The 23 per cent hike works out to about Rs 136.5 a tonne, which is still below the Rs 170-180 going rate in Gujarat and North Karnataka. In Tamil Nadu, farmers are paying as much as Rs 350 a tonne, which, mills there say, could cross Rs 400 once crushing gains pace after Diwali.

"You cannot really compare these rates. Maharashtra factories this season would be crushing 825 lakh tonnes (lt) of cane, whereas other States (barring Uttar Pradesh) will do 100-200 lt each. Given the kind of business volumes we are offering, our rates are more than reasonable," Mr Naiknavare held.

The cutters' unions had earlier threatened to go on strike, while demanding a harvesting rate of Rs 200 a tonne. "The 23 per cent increase is a final rate that has been negotiated for the season, which sets the stage for crushing to take off. So far, 14 mills have started operations, which we expect to touch 60 by the month-end," he added. Crushing has also been delayed because of an extended monsoon, leaving fields wet for labourers and bullock-carts to enter. In Maharashtra, unlike other States, harvesting as well as transport of cane from the fields is organised by the factories themselves. In the 2009-10 season, Maharashtra mills paid growers an average Rs 2,200 a tonne, which, together with harvesting and transport charges of Rs 300, translated into a cane price of around Rs 2,500 a tonne at the factory-gate.

This time, while harvesting labourers would be paid Rs 25/tonne more, the growers themselves may not receive even Rs 2,000 a tonne, according to Mr B.B. Thombare, CMD of the privately owned Natural Sugar & Allied Industries Ltd. "For that, we need ex-factory sugar realisations of Rs 27,000-28,000 a tonne, against the current Rs 24,000," he pointed out.

The steep increase in cane harvesting charges is reflective of the overall tightening of farm

labour markets.

Mr Naiknavare estimates there were 9 lakh manual cane cutters working in Maharashtra during the 2006-07 season, which is now down to 6-6.5 lakh. Moreover, in 2006-07, mills crushed 798.84 lt, a record set to be surpassed this season. "We are, indeed, faced with a challenge of harvesting more cane with less labour," he admitted.

Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu, the situation is even more serious. The State Government has asked mills to pay growers a cane price of Rs 2,000 a tonne, which includes a transport cost of Rs 100. Farmers would, thus, get Rs 1,900, of which they would have to fork out Rs 400 for harvesting labour!

Sugar mills are trying to address the problem by going in for mechanical harvesting. But that calls for a change in planting practices, which takes time. For mechanical harvesting, farmers need to maintain a minimum 4-5 feet spacing between two cane rows, as opposed to the current 2.5-3 feet. Also, since the increased spacing reduces the number of canes planted per acre, farmers have to be convinced it would result in better photosynthesis and hence no yield losses.

"We have imported 84 harvesting machines, which should harvest 10 per cent of the cane this season. As more farmers adopt the new spacing norm, this proportion will progressively go up," Mr Naiknavare claimed.

Tamil Nadu mills last season charged farmers around Rs 250 a tonne for mechanically harvesting their cane. "This time, they will charge more but less than manual harvesting rate," said Mr Ram V. Tyagarajan of Thiru Arooran Sugars.

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**<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2010/10/19/stories/2010101950891900.htm>**

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**[Back](#) Sluggish demand hits rice**



Our Correspondent

Karnal, Oct. 18

The rice market continued to witness a downtrend on Monday because of sluggish demand for aromatic and non-basmati varieties.

The prices of Pusa-1121 (steam) ruled at Rs 5,150 a quintal, Pusa-1121 (sela) around Rs 4,100 and Pusa-1121 (raw) was at Rs 5,100-5,150 a quintal.

Pusa (sela) quoted at Rs 3,150 a quintal and Pusa (raw) at Rs 4,050.

Prices of pure basmati rice ruled unchanged. Basmati sela ruled at Rs 6,000 a quintal, while basmati raw was around Rs 7,000.

With some pressure of new non-basmati rice in the market, prices of non-basmati varieties dropped marginally.

Prices of PR (old) ruled between Rs 2,000 and Rs 2,200, while the PR (new) ruled between Rs 1,900 and Rs 2,200 a quintal.

PR14 (new) was at Rs 2,000, Rs 20 down from last weekend's level. Sharbati sela (old) was at Rs 2,580 and Sharbati steam (new) at Rs 2,700-2,800. The Permal Sela (new) variety ruled at Rs 2,000-2,150 a quintal.

Brokens such as Tibar ruled around Rs 3,500 a quintal, Dubar at Rs 2,500 and Mongra around Rs 1,800.

Mr Amit Kumar, Proprietor, Hanuman Rice Trading Company, told Business Line that because of festive season rice market is witnessing low trading as most of the retailers

and customers are busy with the festive products.

The real position of the market can be valued after Diwali, he said.

More than 1.6 lakh bags of paddy varieties arrived at the Karnal grain market terminal.

Around 41,000 bags of PR-13, ruling between Rs 980 and Rs 1,000 a quintal, were received. Grade-A variety arrived with a stock of 80,000 bags and the stock ruled between Rs 1,025 and Rs 1,050.

Around 30,000 bags of PR-14 were quoted at Rs 1,050-1,110 a quintal.

About 5,000 bags of Sharbati also arrived and the variety ruled between Rs 1,400 and Rs 1,500 a quintal. Sugandha-999, with around 3,000 bags, was quoted at Rs 1,500-1,550. Only 2,000 bags of the RS-10 variety were available. They were quoted at Rs 1,300-1,330 a quintal.

There were 2,000 bags of Pusa (duplicate basmati) quoting at Rs 1,900-2,150. Around 2,000 bags of Pusa-1121 were quoted at Rs 2,000-Rs 2,200 a quintal.

The entire stock was lifted by agencies and rice millers.

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**Back Bharti eyes land in S. America, Africa to produce pulses, oil for India**

Arun S

Recently in Nairobi

One of India's leading business groups, Bharti Enterprises, has expressed interest in taking over land in Africa and South America to engage in agro- and food-processing.

Meanwhile, taking note of the production shortfall of pulses and edible oil in the country, the Union Commerce and Industry Minister, Mr Anand Sharma, has said the Centre would

lend support to the plans of such Indian companies that acquire land in Africa for cultivating and processing items such as pulses and edible oil, and then exporting to India.

#### Namaskar Africa

Mr Rajan Bharti Mittal, Vice-Chairman and Managing Director, Bharti Enterprises, told reporters on the sidelines of “Namaskar Africa” event, organised by the FICCI and the Indian Government in Nairobi last week, that “there has been an offer from the (African) governments for agriculture land for Indian farmers to come and take over land here (in Africa) and there is enough agriculture land which is available.”

“There was a discussion going on. We had gone even to South America. Africa is already on the table. May be (during) the next visit, it will happen here,” Mr Mittal added.

Asked for details, Mr Mittal said: “There are linkages which are being established now beyond just manufacturing and services.”

#### Focus agriculture

Bharti Group is no stranger to Africa as its telecom company, Airtel, recently acquired Kuwait-based Zain's Africa assets for \$10.7 billion and is now operating in 15 African countries.

Mr Mittal said the next focus area will be in agro- and food processing in Africa. “That is really the area of cooperation which will happen,” he said.

Bharti Group has operations in more than 21 countries and has interests in fresh and processed foods, real estate and retail, besides telecom and financial services.

Later, replying to a questionnaire e-mailed by Business Line on the area of land that his company was looking at acquiring in Africa and South America and the crops that it was planning to cultivate, Mr Mittal said, “During my speech in Nairobi, I mentioned that various African Governments have invited the Government of India and through it Indian farmers/companies to come and do farming as the African continent's climate is conducive for pulses and India is a net pulse importer, it would be probably feasible for pulses to be

grown there. However, I can not comment beyond this.”

### Pulses imports

India currently imports around three million tonnes of pulses (around 20 per cent of its total consumption) and eight mt of edible oil (about 60 per cent of its total consumption). India produces around 14.5 mt of pulses and five mt of edible oil.

Mr Anand Sharma said agriculture is a priority area of India's engagement with Africa. If Indian companies acquire agricultural land in Africa and South America, produce commodities such as pulses and edible oil and then export it to India, it will result in technology transfer, investment and employment in those countries, and on the other hand add to India's food security.

Besides, when it comes to some African countries, currently the trade balance is heavily in favour of India (for instance, India exports around \$1.45 billion to Kenya and Kenya exports just \$79 million).

But more exports of such farm produce from Africa to India will lessen this trade imbalance.

“India is the market for such exports of pulses. We will guarantee that any such project of agriculture production, even oil seeds, wherever it is, we will take them. So the projects will come up. There is a guarantee in the sense that India is a big market, we are already importing (pulses and edible oil). So I am sure that India can absorb that production. At the same time we have been investing in agriculture and irrigation (in Africa). We have forged institutional linkages (in Africa),” Mr Sharma said.

The Minister also dismissed allegations of land grabbing against Indian companies. He added that the Indian Government was already helping Africa in irrigation, water management, seed development and crop diversification. India also has institutional linkages with agricultural institutions in Africa, he added.

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Back PG diploma course in technology management in agriculture launched



New venture: Dr P. K. Joshi (right) Director, National Academy of Agricultural Research and Management, announcing the MoU with University of Hyderabad, in Hyderabad on Monday . Beside him is Prof Seyed E. Hasnanain, Vice-Chancellor of UoH. —

Our Bureau

Hyderabad, Oct. 18

The National Academy of Agricultural Research and Management (Naarm), a research agency of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, and the University of Hyderabad (UoH) have teamed up to offer a post-graduate diploma course in technology management in agriculture, through distance-learning mode.

The UoH and Naarm have signed a memorandum of understanding to address the issue of effective grooming of managers, and aim to equip the students with skills required to help improve farm productivity. The focus of the course is to bridge the gap between demand and supply of skilled professionals, who are trained in the new technologies employed in farm operations. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Dr P.K.Joshi, Director of Naarm, said that the PG diploma would be jointly awarded by UoH and Naarm. Naarm may also set up an International School of Management for the IPR

regime.

Apart from addressing issues within the country, this school will have linkages with a few global peers. They have already partnered with with the Saarc centre in Bangladesh, he said.

Opportunity for stakeholders

Referring to the opportunity to impart training in technology management for the agriculture sector, Dr Joshi said various stakeholders in the farm sector, entrepreneurs, progressive farmers, NGOs, institutional participants and private sector players, could make use of this new facility.

Professor Seyed E. Hasnain, Vice-Chancellor of UoH, and Dr Joshi released the brochure. The course fee is Rs 20,000, officials said.

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**Back Cotton slips as millers, exporters stay away**



Our Correspondent

Rajkot, Oct. 18

Cotton prices dropped marginally as millers and exporters stayed away. According to

market sources, buyers are awaiting the Government's decision on cotton export.

Gujarat Sankar-6 cotton price dropped Rs 300-500 to Rs 40,700-40,800 for a candy of 356 kg. Raw cotton price fell by Rs 15-20 to Rs 890-900/20 kg. About 22,000-23,000 bales are arriving every day in Gujarat.

Mr Samir, a Rajkot-based broker, said: "This year, cotton season is late by one month due to heavy rain in the production area. Arrivals have fallen. On the other hand, export demand is there so prices will not decline in a big way."

According to market sources, arrivals will increase after Diwali. At present, the market is eyeing the Government's next meeting on cotton export.

Pakistan's textile industry, hit by a record hike in cotton prices following damage to crop in the recent floods, has become dependent on imports to sustain its order books. It is, particularly, looking at India to fulfil its needs.

Traders in Pakistan have booked 10 lakh bales for delivery from November to January from India.

But India has stopped registering cotton exports applications after registrations touched 55 lakh bales last week.

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**[Back](#) Higher mill prices perk up sugar**



Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Oct. 18

Spot sugar prices on the Vashi wholesale market shot up by Rs 15-20 a quintal on Monday, due to higher prices at the mill level and increased retail demand.

The relatively higher arrivals of the past two days were offset by higher lifting by local buyers and shopkeepers. Mills were keen to sell only at higher prices, expecting fresh demand for Diwali.

Mr Jagdish Rawal, joint secretary of the Bombay Sugar Merchants Association told Business Line: "Despite higher tender rates/quotation by mills, stockists' buying continues to support the volume. There is no pressure for resale selling for outstanding position, as of now. In the last two working days, mills sold good quantity of sugar. Mills have sold around 1.75-2 lakh bags in the range of Rs 2,660-2,630 for S-grade and Rs 2,650-2,685 for M-grade. On Monday, in the same range, sugar was sold through tender. In the evening, tender prices were expected to be up by Rs 5-10. Demand from bulk consumers such as sweet and confectionary makers has begun, and will increase this week, for Diwali."

There was talk in the market that Mathadi Kamgar has threatened to go on an indefinite strike from October 25, if State Governments do not resolve their pending demands. At present, this is the main cause for the market. According to traders, a strike will affect business as loading, unloading work is totally dependent on the Mathadi Kamgar.

On Monday, total arrivals at the Vashi market were at 55-58 truckloads ( 10 tonnes each ) and lifting was about 55-60 truckloads. Mills fresh tender were expected Rs 2,605-2,635 for S-grade and Rs 2,650-2,690 for M-grade.

According to the Sugar Merchants Association, spot rate for S-grade was Rs 2,696-2,746 (Rs 2,693-2,736) and for M-grade Rs 2,731-2,811 (Rs 2,730- 2,801). Naka delivery rates were: S-grade – Rs 2,660-2,690 (Rs 2,655-2,690) and M-grade – Rs 2,715-2,750 (Rs 2,685-2,735).

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[Back](#) Bearish reports stump edible oils



Our Correspondent

Mumbai, Oct. 18

Edible oil spot prices in Mumbai declined on Monday with groundnut oil falling sharply by Rs 30 for 10 kg. In last three days, groundnut oil price in Mumbai has dropped by Rs 50.

Other edible oils, soya and palmolein also declined Rs 2–3 and cotton oil by Rs 7 for 10 kg on poor demand. Rapeseed and sunflower oil ruled steady.

In overseas markets, crude palm oil futures closed lower on lack of buying interest from importing countries. Malaysia's crude palm oil November, December futures closed lower by 40 and 43 ringgits respectively.

Indore NBOT November soya oil futures, after touching a low, extended gains tracking cues from cloudy weather condition.

A wholesaler told Business Line, "In Mumbai spot market, uncertainty, high volatility in the foreign market and bearish reports from the upcountry markets, arrested fresh buying. There is no fresh buying / demand despite Diwali festival. The volume of trade was thin. In palmolein, about 200–250 tonnes resale was done in the price range of Rs 460–463.

“In Gujarat, groundnut oil declined sharply on higher arrivals of new seeds. There was talk of mills from Saurashtra having sold about 8/10 tankers of groundnut oil at Rs 750 for 10 kg. In Gujarat, groundnut oil price has dropped nearly Rs 100 in last 3-4 days. Groundnut arrivals in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh will increase sharply in the coming days.”

Malaysia's BMD CPO futures closed at (MYR): November 2890 (2930), December futures closed at 2887 (2930).

Mumbai commodity exchange spot rate (Rs/10kg): Groundnut oil 830 (860), Soya refined oil 492 (495), Sunflower expeller refined 575 (575), Sunflower refined oil 630 (625), Rapeseed refined oil 580 (580), Rapeseed expeller refined 550 (550), Cotton refined oil 503 (510) and Palmolein 470 (472).

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[Back](#) **Poor buying crushes soyabean**



Our Correspondent

Indore, Oct. 18

Soyabean declined both in spot and futures market on sluggish demand at plant level and increased arrivals. Soyabean in the spot was quoted Rs 50 lower at Rs 2,150-2,190, while plant deliveries were quoted down at Rs 2,150-2,175. Decline in plant deliveries was mainly attributed to their lukewarm interest in purchasing because of constraints of space

to build inventories.

In Indore, arrival of soybean was recorded at 12,000 bags at Rs 1,800-2,130.

On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchanges, the oilseed witnessed sluggish trend with October, November and December futures quoting lower at Rs 2,148, Rs 2,170.50 and Rs 2,310 respectively.

On the other hand, soya oil which had been witnessing bullish trend for the past few days because of perked up festival demand, saw a decline in prices on the back of rise in inventories of imported oils which have increased by six per cent at 9,60,752 tonnes.

Soya solvent quoted Rs 5 lower at Rs 455-456 for 10 kg, while soya refined also quoted Rs 5 down at Rs 482-485. In direct sale, soya refined quoted Rs 487-488, while in resale it was quoted Rs 483-482. In the futures, soya oil quoted lower with October, November and December contracts quoting Rs 510.25, Rs 520.10 and Rs 525.75 respectively. On the National Board of Trade, soya oil opened at Rs 518 and closed at Rs 519.30.

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**Back Lack of offtake pounds turmeric**



Our Correspondent

Erode, Oct. 18

Turmeric prices fell further by Rs 200 a quintal on Monday due to poor demand.

In the Erode turmeric merchants sales yard, prices were almost stable with the finger variety sold at Rs 9,000-14,119, Rs 20 less than last week's price.

Similarly, the root variety was sold at Rs 9,000-13,961, down Rs 48.

In the Gobichettipalayam Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 13,564 to Rs 14,107 on Monday, Rs 200 less than last week's price. The root variety was sold at Rs 12,890 to Rs 13,709 a quintal. This is Rs 500 less than last week price.

In the Erode Cooperative Marketing Society, the finger variety was sold at Rs 13,610-14,109. The root variety was sold at Rs 13,589-13,850.

The finger and root variety declined Rs 131 and Rs 240 respectively on Monday.

In the Regulated Market, finger variety sold at Rs 13,889-14,029, Rs 140 less than last week's price. But the root variety gained Rs 77 a quintal.

On Monday, the root variety was sold at Rs 13,779-14,035 a quintal.

“Due to the decreasing trend the farmers are reluctant to bring their turmeric for sale. We are expecting more farmers to bring their commodity on Tuesday or Wednesday, when the sales may go up,” said Mr R.V. Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

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**Back Different rearing**

— K.K. Mustafah





Excess rains still helps:A farmer rearing ducks in a water-logged paddy field near Thrissur in Kerala. The State has been witnessing heavy downpour for the last few weeks and paddy fields are flooded. Farmers are not able to sow seeds in the flooded fields and the seeds ,due to excess moisture , are being affected by mildew .This has resulted in an acute shortage of paddy seeds in the State.

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**Back Cardamom drops on higher supply**

G.K. Nair

Kochi, Oct. 18

Cardamom prices fell at auctions held last week as increased supply outweighed demand with harvestpeaking towards the end of the second round of picking.

The downward trend continued on Monday also at the CPA auction in Bodinayakannur,

where the auction average dropped to Rs 857.40 a kg, trade sources said today.

Total arrivals during last week from Monday to Sunday stood at 312 tonnes, as there was no auction on Saturday on account of "Mahanavami", trade sources said.

Fall in demand is attributed to the end of Diwali buying by the upcountry dealers. Add to this, the bearish sentiments resulting in a declining trend in the market in recent days has prompted buyers to stay away anticipating a further drop in the prices as the harvesting is in the full swing and reaching its peak by this month-end when second round of picking will be over.

Besides, expectations that the ideal weather conditions prevailing in the growing areas after an unfavourable summer months may lead to better late crop and this also weakened the upcountry demand.

Similar sentiments prevailed among exporters also, who are also waiting for the prices to decline in the coming days, they said.

The individual auction average price dropped to below Rs 900 a kg after a long time to Rs 894 on Sunday.

Total arrivals at the KCPMC auction stood at 73 tonnes and almost the entire quantity was sold out, Mr P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told Business Line. The maximum price dropped from the previous Sunday's Rs 1,176.50 a kg to Rs 1,100. Similarly minimum price fell to 600 a kg from Rs 606.50. The average price dropped to Rs 894.52 from Rs 945 a kg the previous Sunday.

Total arrivals during the current season from August 1 to October 17, stood at 2,536 tonnes. Of this, 2,510 tonnes of cardamom were sold.

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**Back Pepper futures gain marginally on buying support**

G. K. Nair

Kochi, Oct 18

Pepper futures moved up marginally on some buying support on Monday amid limited availability.

All the contracts gained. There was good switching over, liquidation, and buying back.

Local arms of multi-origin with multinational operations were said to be interested to buy exchange validity-expired stock even at a premium for early delivery for shipping out directly to their processing facilities in Vietnam, where the value-addition cost is cheap. After processing there, the product would be shipped out to meet their export commitments, market sources said.

Weakening of rupee against the dollar has made Malabar further competitive in spite of market marginally closing higher.

MG1(560 g/l) is said to be available at \$4,200 a tonne (f.o.b), and if it remained competitive, then these companies would buy and ship it out. Probably, rumours about this development might have made the market bullish in the latter part of the trading session today and pushed up the prices marginally, they told Business Line.

Meanwhile, there were no sellers in the terminal and primary markets. In the primary market, dealers were not even quoting, they said.

October contract on the National Commodity Derivatives Exchange moved up by Rs 76 a quintal to close at Rs 18,413. November and December also went up by Rs 81 and Rs 83, respectively, to close at Rs 18,714 and Rs 18,995 a quintal.

Total turn over increased by 2,965 tonnes to 7,580 tonnes. Total open interest dropped by 350 tonnes to 14,039 tonnes.

October contract dropped by 899 tonnes to 3,146 tonnes, while that of November and December increased by 491 tonnes and 52 tonnes respectively to 9,104 tonnes and 1,548

tonnes.

Spot prices remained unchanged at Rs 18,100 (ungarbled) and Rs 18,600 (MG1) a quintal on matching thin demand and supply.

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**Back Farmers set up company to promote, sell emu products**

Our Bureau

Vijayawada, Oct 18

Farmers of Krishna district have come together to set up a private company to promote awareness about emu products in the public and to sell them. The office was inaugurated at Machavaram on Monday.

On the occasion, Mr Y. Ganeswara Rao, the Managing Director of the Krishna Emu Products Private Ltd and Mr G. Purnachandra Reddy, one of the directors, said emu rearing had increased substantially in the district in recent years and farmers felt the need for the setting up emu processing units and sales outlets. They had set up the company with the purpose in view. There was also a need to educate the public on the many health benefits of emu meat and oil.

They said emu birds aged between 14 and 18 months be processed at the units. The meat and fat would be separated. Emu skin and eggs were also being used for various purposes, they said and added that the bird's toenails were in great demand in the market.

They said emu rearing was promising to be a great source of revenue to the farmers and it was also generating rural employment. The farmers would be able to take up emu rearing on a long-term basis and in a sustained manner, if there were local processing units and ready local market. The main objective of the company would be to create such a market, they added.

The growth in emu rearing would also indirectly benefit growers of maize and soya – the

main ingredients of the birds' feed.

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**Back Coonoor tea auction turnover down 9.18%**

P.S. Sundar

Coonoor, Oct. 18

The turnover at the Coonoor Tea Trade Association auctions continues to remain low , an analysis of the Market Reports has revealed.

By January end, the turnover was up by 36 per cent over last year. By February end, the increase reduced to 18 per cent. By March end, the increase rose to 24 per cent, but fell to 19 per cent by April end, 7 per cent by May end and 1.39 per cent by June end.

By July end, the turnover was lower by 3.18 per cent compared with last year and by August end, it had fallen 6.22 per cent below last year. Now, the gap has widened and by September end, the turnover ruled 9.18 per cent lower than the corresponding period of last year.

Turnover has dipped despite higher volume of sales, because of the steep fall in the prices fetched. Till September end, 39 auctions were conducted. In all, 3.86 crore kg were sold, against 3.37 crore kg last year. However, every kg fetched Rs 15 less, to average Rs 59.97.

Consequently, the turnover totalled Rs 231.48 crore against Rs 254.87 crore last year, a decline of Rs 23.39 crore.

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**Back Precious bloom**

– Nissar Ahmad



Saffron bounty:A Kashmiri girl plucks saffron flowers from a field in Chatergam, 30 km south of Srinagar, on Monday.

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