

NEWS FLASH –16th March, 2016

SUGAR

29.95 LT sugar worth \$194 m exported in Apr-Jan

India has exported 29.95 lakh tonnes (LT) of sugar during the first ten months of the current fiscal that is valued at USD 194 million, Parliament was informed today.

The country had exported 19.55 LT of sugar in 2014-15 fiscal valued at USD 103.93 million.

"At present, export of sugar is free without any restriction. The government is not promoting its export with a view to expand sugar mills in the country," Commerce and Industry Minister Nirmla Sitharaman said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

However, with a view to reduce the inventory pressure on domestic sugar prices, the government has fixed Minimum Indicative Export Quota (MIEQ) for each mill for sugar season 2015-16 so as to evacuate surplus stocks, she said.

The minister also informed that the Indian Missions located in target countries have been requested to pursue various trade opportunities with a view to evacuate surplus sugar.

Trade delegations have also been mounted to some of the important destination countries, she said.

According to industry body Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), the country's sugar production rose 2 per cent to 19.94 million tonnes (MT) during the first five months of the current marketing year (October-September).

Sugar output of India, the world's second-largest producer and biggest consumer, is estimated to decline to 26 MT in 2015-16 marketing year as against 28.3 MT in the previous year due to deficit rains.

(Source- <http://www.indiansugar.com/NewsDetails.aspx?nid=5338>, published on 15th March, 2016)

Government rules out loan waiver to sugar mills

Government today ruled out any new package or loan waiver to sugar mills although their dues to sugarcane farmers have touched Rs 15,893 crore.

Due to surplus output in the last four years and depressed prices, the liquidity of sugar mills have been "adversely" affected leading to accumulation of cane price arrears of the farmers, Food Minister Ram Vilas Paswan said in a written reply to Lok Sabha.

As on March 5, cane price arrears to farmers reached Rs 15,893.36 crore in over past three years, he said.

Of the total, Rs 13,644 crore is for the ongoing 2015-16 season (October-September), while Rs 1,366 crore is for the 2014-15 season and Rs 882.07 crore for 2013-14 and earlier seasons, he added.

Asked if the government proposes to provide any package to improve the condition of sugar mills and ensure timely payment of cane arrears, Paswan said: "There is no new proposal under consideration of the government to provide any package/ incentive including creation of buffer stocks."

"There is no plan under consideration of the government to waive...loan provided to the sugar mills."

The government has extended financial assistance in the form of soft loan, incentive on raw sugar export and performance-based production subsidy scheme in order to improve the liquidity position of the sugar mills enabling them to make timely payment of sugarcane dues, he said.

The financial assistance provided by the government are utilised to facilitate liquidation of cane price arrears of farmers. This is ensured through submission of utilisation certificate of sugar mills duly verified by the state government, he added.

Sugar production is estimated to be 26 million tonnes for the 2015-16 season, lower than 28.1 million tonnes last year.

(Source- <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/government-rules-out-loan-waiver-to-sugar-mills/articleshow/51410181.cms>, published on 15th March, 2016)

CO-GEN/ POWER

Coal India to get anti-theft technology in place by April-end

Coal India's measures to prevent theft by electronically "fencing" mining areas and fitting trucks with a GPS-based tracking system will be finished by the end of April, a government official said.

As much as a fifth of the state-run company's annual output is stolen, costing it up to \$1 billion each year and feeding a huge black market in the fuel.

Coal India's modernisation plan, first reported by Reuters in January, includes tracking trucks and using Google maps to "fence" mines, which will alert managers if a truck diverts from its route.

Coal Secretary Anil Swarup said on Monday that reducing the amount of coal stolen and improving the quality of coal sold were his top priorities.

Coal India, the world's largest miner, wants to nearly double output to 1 billion tonnes by 2020 and has already spent more than half of its targeted budget of 3 billion rupees (\$45 million) on an overhaul, a top company source said.

Last year, Coal India unit Mahanadi Coalfields blacklisted third-party contractors of 36 trucks, each carrying up to 17 tonnes of coal, after managers received telephone alerts of route violations that could have led to theft.

Mahanadi has also installed CCTV cameras at shipment sites, hooked up trucks with satellites and fitted them with radio frequency identification tags to automatically transfer data to a control room at the company's headquarters.

(Source -<http://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/coal/coal-india-to-get-anti-theft-technology-in-place-by-april-end/51403874>, published on March 16, 2016)

ETHANOL

Work out plan for ethanol blending: House panel to Oil Ministry

A Parliamentary committee has asked the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas to work out a comprehensive plan for achieving the targets of the Ethanol Blended Petrol programme within a stipulated timeframe.

It has also sought a reply on the issue from Ministry within 30 days.

The Standing Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas in an Action Taken report on Ethanol Blended Petrol and Bio Diesel Policy, tabled in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, expressed displeasure at the Oil Ministry's 'lackadaisical approach' to the Ethanol Blended Petrol programme.

The Committee had earlier recommended a comprehensive plan for achieving the targets but expressed displeasure at the Ministry's reply.

"The Ministry, in its Action Taken Reply has only stated that it has noted the recommendation without giving any details of the action taken on the recommendation for an effective implementation of the programme. The Committee seriously deprecates such casual attitude of the Ministry in responding to the recommendation of the Committee," the report stated. Further, the Committee also recommended that an Industry Working Group should be set up to look into the feasibility of production of ethanol from variety of edible and non-edible feedstocks and more funds from the Ministry for research and development in this field.

While the Ministry said it has asked oil marketing companies to set up three pilot projects for ethanol from feedstock other than sugarcane, the Committee said such isolated efforts will yield no result.

“The Committee, therefore reiterate their recommendation and desire that the Ministry should undertake the initiatives by forming an industry working group in cooperation with concerned Ministries/Departments,” the report added.

Even on the bio-diesel policy, the Committee was not satisfied with the Ministry's reply of oil marketing companies buying bio-diesel conforming to BIS norms at a uniform price decided from time to time.

“The Committee, however, are not satisfied with the reply as it does not spell out any time frame by which the bio-diesel would be commercially available in major centres and how much blending would be achieved at various stages,” the report added.

(Source: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-news/work-out-plan-for-ethanol-blending-house-panel-to-oil-ministry/article8358070.ece> , published on March 14, 2016)

THOUGHT OF THE DAY:

“Talk to yourself once in a day..otherwise you will miss meeting an excellent person in the World.”

– Swami Vivekananda