

Jute tech use to help prevent soil erosion

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Jan 6 – The perennial problem of soil erosion, landslides and short life span of roads due to incessant rains in Assam might find a natural solution if government agencies take a bold step to accept the new Jute Geo-Textile (JGT) technology.

The JGT, being aggressively pushed by the National Jute Board (NJB), is an emerging technology which has been proved as cheaper and much more environment friendly compared to synthetic geo-textile.

Although 170 trial projects were successfully undertaken in 22 States by two Central government and 19 State government agencies so far, no State except for West Bengal has shown practical interest

in promoting jute in a big way.

The Government of West Bengal, which contributes 70 per cent of total jute production in the country, has already included JGT in its “rate list” allowing it to be used in relevant construction work and also in the process of making its use mandatory for construction of PMGSY and other rural roads in the State.

As a trial project, JGT was used in constructing a 7 km-long road in Tripura, among 170 projects, in very few other States in the country.

The Border Roads Organisation has successfully used JGT in slope management work in the landslide-prone Sonapur area along NH-44 besides a few other north-eastern States, such as Arunachal, Manipur and Nagaland.



Subrata Gupta (c) addressing the press meet in Guwahati on Tuesday. – UB Photos

Besides, NF Railway has procured 80,000 square meters of JGT to be used alongside the erosion-prone portions of railway tracks in the region, including in Garo Hills, said Subrata Gupta, Jute Commissioner of NJB.

Next to West Bengal, Assam is the biggest jute producer in the country, although there are very few jute mills in the State, which produce bags and other materials. But it is yet to start JGT production.

The workshop on JGT was held with the objective of sensitizing the State government departments about the need for using environment friendly and cost effective technology.

Use of JGT also allows the need for a thinner layer of concrete materials to build a road compared to that without JGT, which ultimately reduces the cost.

The NJB will hold discussions with the authorities in Assam so as to explore the possibility of use of JGT in controlling erosion by mighty Brahmaputra and other rivers, a perennial problem, in the State.

सूरजकुंड मेले की सुरक्षा सख्त

फरीदाबाद। खुफिया एजेंसियों द्वारा बीते दिनों जारी किए गए एनसीआर और फरीदाबाद में बढ़ती आतंकवादियों की सक्रियता की सूचना के बाद हरियाणा सरकार ने एक फरवरी से शुरू होने वाले सूरजकुंड मेले की सुरक्षा व्यवस्था सुदृढ़ करने का निर्णय लिया है। मेले में इस बार ज्यादा सुरक्षा कर्मी तैनात किए जाएंगे।

Farmers Hope Cotton Purchase to Go up after Makar Sankranti

Jayashree.Bhosale
@timesgroup.com

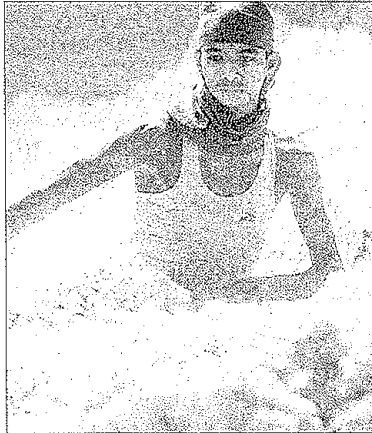
Pune: Even as one of the biggest government procurement operations of cotton in recent times is underway in the country, arrivals of the fibre crop are likely to increase substantially after Makar Sankranti, especially in central and south India.

Farmers, who are still holding the fibre crop, hoping the prices to improve, are expected to take out their produce to the market in January and February.

Trade sources said the country has exported 25 lakh bales so far in the current season, mainly to Bangladesh, Pakistan and Vietnam.

BS Rajpal, managing director, Aurangabad-based Manjeet Cotton, said: "Farmers across the country believe that they get good price if they sell cotton after the festival of Makar Sankranti. So the arrivals of cotton are expected to go up substantially after January 15."

The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has opened 67 procurement centres in Maharashtra while Maharashtra State Co-operative Cotton Growers' Federation (Mahacot), which is acting as an agent of CCI, has been



running 100 centres. Mahacot has procured 8 lakh quintal cotton; the CCI has procured about 29 lakh quintal, while private traders have procured about 39 lakh quintal cotton till January 7 in Maharashtra, the second largest producer of the crop.

The state is expected to produce 400 lakh quintal cotton in 2014-15.

Thus more than 75% of the cotton still remains to be purchased. NP Hirani, chairman, Mahacot said, "With only about one fourth of the cotton having been procured, we expect the arrivals to go up substantially in January and February."

The CCI had procured 41 lakh bales across the country till Ja-

nuary 8 and expects to buy about the same quantity during the remaining period of the procurement season. The government body's procurement has been most vigorous in the south and poorest in Gujarat, the top cotton producer.

CCI's share in cotton procurement is about 50% in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, slightly more than 50% in Maharashtra while it is about 10% to 20% in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and Haryana.

In fact, 15 of the total 63 centres of the CCI in Gujarat, which produces the branded-Sankar variety of cotton, are non-operational. BK Mishra, CCI chairman and managing director, said that it expects a rise in procurement in Maharashtra and Gujarat in next two months, but only marginally. "Farmers are still holding on to cotton in Maharashtra and Gujarat. There could be a marginal increase in arrivals in these two states," said Mishra. Sources from multinational commodity trading houses said that they are staying off the procurement this season. "None of us want to buy because we do not see any big jump in prices," said an official from a trading house, requesting not to quote him.

म ५६ ४० फासद स आधक यागदान करता ह ।

सीसीआइ ने कपास की ४१ लाख गांठें खरीदीं

नई दिल्ली, ८ जनवरी (भाषा)। सरकारी उपक्रम भारतीय कपास निगम (सीसीआइ) ने इस साल अभी तक आंध्र प्रदेश और महाराष्ट्र जैसे प्रमुख उत्पादक राज्यों से न्यूनतम समर्थन मूल्य (एमएसपी) कपास की ४१ लाख गांठों की खरीद की है। अपेक्षित अधिक उत्पादन के मद्देनजर घरेलू कीमतों में भारी गिरावट से किसानों को संरक्षित करने के लिए सीसीआइ ने अक्टूबर २०१४ से समर्थन मूल्य पर खरीद अभियान शुरू किया था। कपड़ा मंत्रालय के एक वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने बताया कि इस वर्ष कपास खरीद ४१ लाख गांठ हो चुकी है। कपास की एक गांठ १७० किलो की होती है। कपास की सर्वाधिक खरीद आंध्र प्रदेश और तेलंगाना से हुई। इसके बाद महाराष्ट्र का स्थान आता है।

मृगनयनी में थेवा उत्सव शुरू



थेवा उत्सव का दीप जलाकर उद्घाटन करते पूर्व चेयरमैन माधव सिंह डांगी।

नोएडा (एसएनबी)। मध्यप्रदेश हस्तशिल्प एवं हथकरघा विकास निगम लि. के मृगनयनी इम्पोरियम में बृहस्पतिवार से थेवा उत्सव की शुरुआत की गई। सेक्टर-29 के ब्रह्मपुत्रा कॉम्प्लेक्स स्थित मृगनयनी इम्पोरियम में आयोजित थेवा उत्सव का उद्घाटन मृगनयनी के पूर्व चेयरमैन माधव सिंह डांगी ने किया। उन्होंने कहा कि थेवा कला कांच पर सोने की नक्काशी को कहते हैं। 1700 वर्ष पुरानी इस कला का प्रयोग राजा महाराजा अपने महलों की सजावट में इस्तेमाल होने वाले सामानों के लिए करते थे। मृगनयनी इम्पोरियम के ऑफिसर इंचार्ज केएस मिश्रा ने बताया कि यह प्राचीन कला विलुप्त हो रही थी लेकिन मध्यप्रदेश के नीमच जिले के रामपुरा गांव के रहने वाले प्रसिद्ध कलाकार गणपत सोनी ने अपनी लगन व मेहनत से इसे नया रूप दिया है। 40 साल पहले सोनी ने विलुप्त होती इस कला को बचाने के लिए प्रयास शुरू किए और इसे ज्वेलरी के रूप में पुनर्जीवित किया है। उन्होंने अपनी कला के जरिए पूरी दुनिया में लोहा मनवाया और 1994 में राष्ट्रपति ने उन्हें पुरस्कृत किया। उन्होंने बताया कि आज गणपत सोनी का परिवार ही थेवा कला की बारिकियां जानता है। इसके जरिए नेकलेस, टॉप्स, कोट बटन, रिस्ट वॉच समेत तमाम ज्वेलरी बनाई जा रही है।



LOSING APPEAL The entrance to the Nokia SEZ in Tamil Nadu where several factories, including that of Foxconn, are located

Tamil Nadu fights to retain edge in 'Make in India' race

The state has unveiled a new automobile policy and is overhauling its bio-tech and textiles policy to woo investors who are increasingly bypassing it in favour of other destinations

T NARASIMHAN
Chennai, 8 January

Among the 10 states chosen by the Centre to kick-start its "Make in India" campaign is Tamil Nadu. Despite the closure of the Nokia unit followed by Foxconn suspending its operations in the state, the state government insists that all is well and that, driven by the automobile industry, the manufacturing sector will continue to grow. Experts, however, are of the opinion that given the negative sentiment and with competition mounting from neighbouring states, Tamil Nadu needs to be more pro-active in wooing investors.

Tamil Nadu is the second largest state economy and the second most industrialised state after Maharashtra. In 2013-14, its manufacturing sector growth at 3.53 per cent was higher than the country's growth rate for the sector at 0.71 per cent. In terms of gross domestic production, the state's Industry Minister P Thangamani says Tamil Nadu at 794 per cent was way ahead of the national growth rate of 4.94 per cent in 2013-14.

At 42,000, the state boasted of the highest number of factories in 2014 across segments: automobiles and components, castings and forgings, pumps and motors, garments and textiles, leather, and chemicals and plastics, to name a few. Along with Maharashtra and Gujarat, it is also one of the three states whose manufacturing sector is comparable with that of upper middle-income countries. The state has attracted ₹44,402 crore in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the last three years and has seen the signing of 33 memorandums of understanding worth ₹31,706 crore since May 2011, of which ₹14,305 crore has been invested.

While the numbers point to a thriving manufacturing sector in Tamil Nadu, experts and industry leaders are worried that the political situation, power shortage and competition from neighbouring states, especially Andhra Pradesh, could come in the way of growth.

Kumar Kandaswami, senior director, Deloitte India, says Tamil Nadu lags other states when it comes to product inno-

vation and scaling up its companies. Barely a handful of companies operating in the state have a turnover of \$1 billion, even though they have been in existence for decades, he adds. Land acquisition is a challenge too because Tamil Nadu is one of the most urbanised states of India and, therefore, land prices there are sky high. The other obstacle is that about 60 per cent of the state's industrial production happens within 150 km of Chennai. To push industrialisation beyond its capital, the state will need to create social infrastructure beyond Chennai to attract migrant workers. However, with the power situation in the state's hinterland being grim, the task won't be easy.

Power problems

Though it has traditionally been a sound manufacturing base for auto and auto components, Tamil Nadu must address power issues, bring about transparency and make bureaucrats more accessible to people, says V Narasimhan, chairman (manufacturing committee) of the Confederation of Indian Industry's Southern Region. He says till a few months ago, the state was also missing a strong leadership, but things are now beginning to look up. "Nothing is lost. If we move fast, we can regain what we have lost," he adds.

At a meeting with industrialists in Coimbatore last month, Thangamani said, "The state government is with you and will develop infrastructure to meet the need of the industries. There may be some delay in clearances or creating necessary infrastructure, but the government wants to provide all the facilities to make Tamil Nadu as the most industry-friendly state in India."

This assurance reportedly came after complaints from industrialists that since J Jayalalithaa stepped down as chief minister, no files had been moving and the process of getting approvals had become tedious. The state's political situation had witnessed an upheaval following the arrest of Jayalalithaa while she was the chief minister. The political instability the arrest caused had industrialists worried. Allaying their fears, Thangamani said, "Our ultimate goal is

DRIVING GROWTH

Key numbers from Tamil Nadu's automobile industry

3.55 million units is the annual automobile production capacity

21% of India's automobile exports is from the state

20% of installed capacity of vehicle components is in Tamil Nadu

8.1% of the country's GDP in 2013-14 was contributed by Tamil Nadu

THE TARGET

■ 6 million vehicles annually by 2020.

■ An integrated ultra-mega automobile and auto components projects

■ A rebate of 5 or 10 per cent on land procured from State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu

■ 50 per cent concession on stamp duty and an additional capital subsidy of 5 per cent to automobile hubs

■ Allow 24x7 operations as well as flexibility in employment conditions, including in the working hours for women and hiring of contract workers

to realise the state's Vision 2023." Vision 2023 sets a target of 14 per cent growth per annum in the manufacturing sector and aims to attract investment of ₹15 lakh crore across all sectors by 2023.

The minister said that in the next two years, the state expected an investment commitment of ₹1 lakh crore, a major chunk of which would come from the automobile industry. Thangamani added that the Tamil Nadu government's target was to increase its automobile production capacity to six mil-

lion units by 2020. The current capacity is 3.55 million units.

Giving the state a miss

But the question is: Where will this investment come from? Ford, one of the early original equipment manufacturers (OEM) that set up factory near Chennai, has chosen Gujarat for its second facility. It said it was moving out of the state to be closer to other markets in the country. Hyundai, despite running its plant at 98 per cent capacity, is yet to announce its expansion plans and though the company has denied it, there is speculation that it might be exploring opportunities in Rajasthan or Gujarat. Mahindra & Mahindra, which was supposed to invest ₹4,000 crore to set up an automotive plant, is yet to get land. Isuzu and Peugeot have decided to invest in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat, respectively. France-based glass maker Saint-Gobain, whose first plant was set up near Chennai, has also decided to expand its manufacturing capacity by setting up a ₹1,000-crore manufacturing facility in Bhiwadi, Rajasthan. And the Andhra Pradesh government recently approved Ranico Cement's 2.5 million-tonne plant in Kurnool district.

To a question on competition from Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat, Thangamani said, "People will stone the tree that bears a large number of fruits." There are signs the state is gearing up to portray Tamil Nadu in a brighter light to investors. Recently, it unveiled an automobile policy that focuses on the future development and consolidation of the automobile and components industry. These are areas where the state enjoys a comparative advantage. To attract more investment in hardware manufacturing, the state has set up an expert committee with representatives from the industry to evaluate the potential and advise the government on the way forward. The state government is also planning to bring out new bio-tech and textile policies. Tamil Nadu clearly does not want to lose out in the "Make in India" race.

41 lakh bales of cotton at MSP

State-run Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has procured 41 lakh bales of cotton so far this year at the minimum support price (MSP) from key growing states like Andhra and Maharashtra.

Cotton body obtains 41 lakh bales this yr

New Delhi, Jan 8: State-run Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has procured 41 lakh bales of cotton so far this year at the minimum support price from key growing states like Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The CCI started the procurement operation at the support price from October 2014 to protect farmers from sharp decline in domestic prices in view of expected higher production.

"Cotton procurement has reached 41 lakh bales of 170 kg each so far this year. Maximum procurement was from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, followed by Maharashtra," a senior textile ministry official told PTI.

About 27 lakh bales of cotton have been purchased from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, 7,00,000 bales from Maharashtra, 2,20,000 bales from Gujarat and

around 2,00,000 bales from Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan, the official added.

Cotton prices in domestic market are ruling below support price of ₹4,050 per quintal for last few months.

The sluggish trend is expected to continue due to poor export demand, especially from China, amid higher local production.

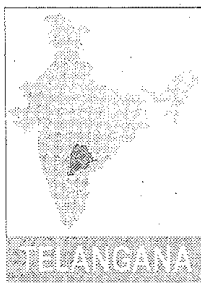
In global markets, cotton prices have fallen substantially since last spring (March-May), when they were



above 90 cents per pound to under 70 cents per pound in December, according to the US-based International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC). The contraction in China's demand for cotton yarn imports is expected to cause India's cotton consumption growth to slow to 4%, reaching 5.3 million tonne (24.34 million bales).

PTI

BV MAHALAKSHMI



Keshaviah, a weaver for 40 years, had high hopes that his expertise in the Ikat art would fetch him a better income. But the lack of adequate infrastructure and finances is not making

his dreams come true. Pochampally weaves are tie-and-dye designs, popularly known as Ikat. They are a century-old tradition and on par with well-known weaving centres in the south such as Kancheepuram, Dharmavaram, Venkatagiri and Gadwal.

Pochampally handloom products are well-known in India as well as in the export markets. Ikat is a process of tie-and-dye applied to the yarn, giving it different shades before it is woven into fabric. The uniqueness lies in the transfer of design and colouring into the warp and weft threads first. The fabric can be cotton, silk or sico (a mix of silk and cotton). Ikat is the first Indian textile process to obtain IPR protection under the Geographical Indications (GI) Act. It is ironic that this art is in deep trouble.

Bhoodan Pochampally, a mandal in Nalgonda district in Telangana, was once popularly known as the silk city of India. In a cluster of over 80 villages, it was buzzing with skilful weavers.

To benefit the weavers, the Pochampally Handloom Park Ltd was set up by 35-odd entrepreneurial master weavers. It is an integrated textile park that houses design, dyeing and weaving facilities for textiles under a single roof. It was inaugurated in 2008 and has been in operation for the last three years. Located in Kanumukkala in Pochampally mandal, the textile park is spread over 24 acres.

"We started the park with 550 looms but due to lack of working capital only 150 looms are currently in operation," says Damodar, the director and CEO of the park. It has over 16 global customers and earned ₹3 crore last year and is hopeful of getting ₹5 crore this year. "This is just a beginning in exports. We are seeing huge demand for this weave but are unable to fulfil the requirements as we need additional finances," he says. The park is in talks with the state government for infrastructural support, and with banks and private equity players for financial support. He says he needs at least ₹5 crore to revive this craft. The price of raw material has increased by 45% in the last few years.

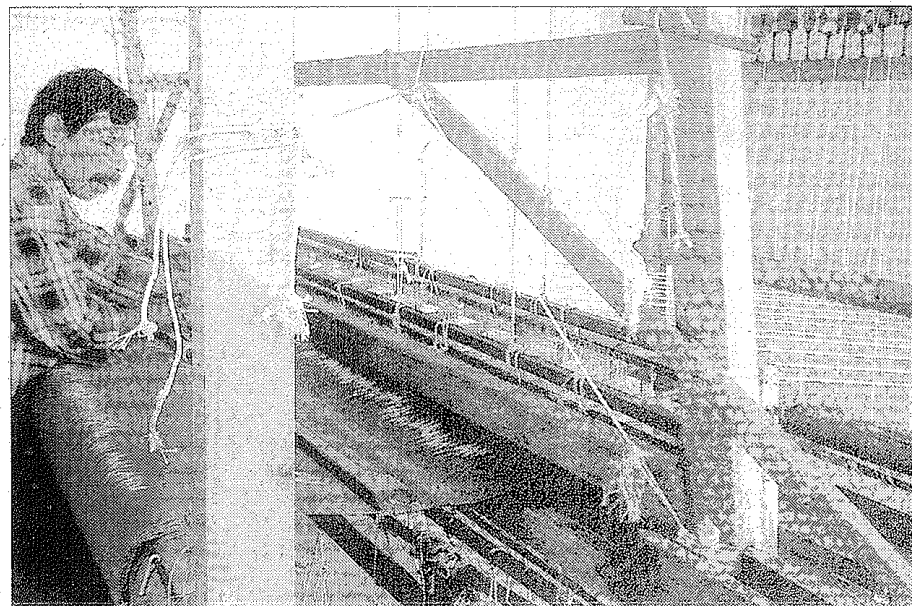
The park was expected to produce niche high-end products, to conform to quality standards, and be flexible in manufacturing new products through product diversification and continuous innovation. It was also expected to produce custom-made designs, and stick to timely delivery. All this is difficult without proper investment coming in.

The GI mark, which was received in

Regional caFE

Saving Pochampally

Pochampally handloom products need immediate support from the government in the form of assistance in marketing, branding and insurance to the weavers



2005, is yet to give a fresh lease of life to the handloom weavers of Pochampally. "Though there is a clear shift in the customer preference over the years, there is still a huge demand for the traditional and exquisite Pochampally handloom weaves among high-end customers and exporters. They have to reach the right market. The weavers are not properly paid for their back-breaking work. A weaver gets only ₹4,500-₹8,000 a month.

The irony is that the world's top 10 fashionable brands are now selling Pochampally products. The weave has attracted fashion players such as Reef, Loft, Calypso, Joie, Ann Taylor for stoles, shoes, women wear, scarves, even suitcase covers. The weavers are in the learning mode for newer designs rather than holding on to conventional designs because of the change in market dynamics. "There is a lot of interest from American and European retailers for genuine handloom weaves in both fabric and finished products," Damodar says. But he hastens to add that there is need for marketing support. Brand value is diminishing due to spiralling prices in the local market. "There was huge demand for Pochampally sarees, both cotton and silk, and we used to sell over 100 sarees a month 5 years ago. Though there is still a lot of consumer interest, prices have pushed down sales," says a saree retailer.

According to representatives from the weavers community, the domestic market for Pochampally silk sarees used to be ₹200 crore a few years ago.

"The market for Pochampally sarees has been coming down gradually. In the last two years, we have witnessed a clear change in the customer's choice. They opt for synthetic and embroidery sarees over these traditional Ikat tie-and-dye sarees, except on certain special occasions. Unsold stock is increasing in the looms," the representatives said.

Several representations were made to the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh State Handloom Weavers' Cooperative Society (APCO) to purchase the stock for the benefit of the weavers. But they are not willing to purchase stock from weavers who are not members of the cooperative society. "This stand of the APCO is not helping the weaving community, as nearly 90% of the weavers are not part of the cooperative society and only 10% are members. We have made representations to the state government but nothing has happened so far," they said.

If the government does not come to the rescue of the weavers, the situation would worsen. Already, some traders operating in Pochampally have downed their shutters and have turned to other businesses for their livelihood. Weavers have also started shifting their base to the cities to find jobs in agencies which offer security services to corporates.

Ikat needs immediate support from the government in the form of assistance in marketing, branding and insurance to the weavers. There is a real danger of Pochampally weaves fading away in the near future.

RPRS gets encouraging response in Darrang district

CORRESPONDENT

MANGALDAI, Jan 6 – Rajor Padulit Rajor Sarkar (RPRS), a special programme to take governance and the grievance redressal mechanism to the doorsteps has been launched in Darrang district along with other parts of the State.

The programme which is going to cover all the 75 GPs of the district in four different phases, got a satisfactory response from 20 GPs on the launch day on Saturday itself, as a total of 2296 applications were received under six Development Blocks. Project Director, DRDA, Darrang, Bivas Modi, who is one of the senior officers looking after the programme under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner, Darrang,

Manoj Kumar while informing this to this correspondent said that 115 applications in an average from a GP is considered encouraging as far as the district administration is concerned. Out of these, the majority of the applications centred around toilets under Nirmal Bharat Abhijan (NBA), followed by individual inputs from IAY houses and old age pension under P&RD, other beneficiary schemes under Agriculture, Handloom & Textile, National Food Security Act (NFSA) under Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs etc. However, the least number of applications were received for the Health and Social Welfare schemes, he added.

However, uproarious scenes were witnessed when

the matter of beneficiary selections under NFSA, IAY and NBA schemes came up for discussion in GPs like Burha, Sherpur, Aulachowka etc.

Earlier in the morning, the programme was kicked off with the cleanliness drives in all government establishments and institutions followed by inspection of local Anganwadi centres, schools, health institutions, Fair Price Shops (FPS). People were found to be sceptical about the fate of the petitions received by the departments. Twenty different teams with nine officials in addition to one woman member and a local social worker in each GP has been formed for the programme which will conclude tomorrow.

CCI to sell cotton from January 15

M. Soundariya Preetha

COIMBATORE: The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) plans to start selling the cotton, which it purchased at the minimum support price (MSP) from the market, from January 15.

CCI director (marketing) M. M. Chockalingam told *The Hindu* that the Corporation had so far purchased 40 lakh bales. It planned to sell 10,000 bales every day and measures would be taken to ensure there was no fluctuation in prices.

The CCI was now present in 341 centres and purchasing cotton actively in about 150 centres.

In the southern States, the CCI purchased 70-80 per cent of arrivals and in Gujarat and Maharashtra, it was about 10-15 per cent of spot arrivals. Traders are active in these two States, and are purchasing cotton at more than



the MSP. The total purchases by the Corporation this season (October, 2014, to September, 2015) at MSP is expected to go up to 100 lakh bales.

Trade sources here said arrivals had picked up, and over two lakh bales of cotton were coming to the market every day. Though there were no quality issues, export demand was almost nil and domestic mills were buying only limited stocks.