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NEWS CLIPPINGS –21-12-2017

Oppn protests govt reply on compensation for bollworm attack	Business Standard http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/oppn-protests-govt-reply-on-compensation-for-bollworm-attack-117121901149_1.html
<p>The opposition in the Maharashtra Legislative Council today staged a walk-out, terming the BJP-led state government's reply on farmers' issues, including compensation for losses due to bollworm attack on cotton crop, as unsatisfactory. Leader of Opposition Dhananjay Munde (NCP), Neelam Gorhe, Jayant Patil, Amar Singh, Jogendra Kawade and others cornered the government on the issues of farmer suicides, loan waiver, irrigation, minimum support prices and losses suffered by cotton growers due to bollworm attack.</p> <p>Munde demanded that the government announce a compensation of Rs 25,000 per hectare to cotton growers affected by the bollworm attack. He also demanded that the government publish a list of farmers who have got the benefit of farm loan waiver, and the details of money deposited in their accounts. Minister of State for Agriculture Sadabhau Khot said that orders have been issued to district collectors to conduct panch-nama (inspection) of the losses due to the pest attack. Also, complaints were being collected from the farmers who sowed BT cotton seeds (but still suffered the pest attack), so that losses on account of the bollworm can be recovered from the seed manufacturing companies, said the minister.</p> <p>"A review meeting on BT seed was held in the presence of Union agriculture minister Radha Mohan Singh, Union minister Nitin Gadkari, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and NCP chief Sharad Pawar via video conference. The Union government will be sending a report to the state government on this matter," Khot said.</p> <p>"I want to assure the house that a compensation for bollworm attack-affected farmers will be announced before the end of the (ongoing) winter session," the minister said. However, not satisfied with ministers' replies, opposition members staged a walk-out. "This government is completely anti-farmer and is not serious about the issue of agrarian crisis," said Munde. Earlier, during the discussion, Jayant Patil asked whether the research conducted by agriculture universities reaches the farmers. The House must also know what research these universities are conducting to address farmers' problems, Patil said. Khot said that agriculture universities are conducting research on BT seeds, and very soon better seeds will be made available to farmers.</p>	

IGST: refunds being done faster

The Hindu

<http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/igst-refunds-being-done-faster-says-official/article22120249.ece>

Initial technical glitches and errors made by traders in providing shipping details under IGST had led to a lot of delays in providing the refund, said Joint Commissioner of Central GST and Central Excise, V. Pandiraja. Addressing a meeting of manufacturers and traders involved in exports, he said that most of the delay was due to errors in giving details of shipping bills. Now, refunds were being done faster.

Under the post-GST regime, works of Central Excise and Customs have been separated. From January 1, 2018, Chief Commissionerate Customs (Preventive), Tiruchi, would become functional and all customs-related functions across Tamil Nadu, except for Chennai region, would be under it. K. Ramesh, Assistant Commissioner of Customs, Cuddalore Division, said that additional Customs divisions would come up at Madurai, Tiruppur, Chengalpattu. He said that under the GST regime claiming refund under IGST had been made hassle-free. "It is online with less human intervention. It would be processed automatically and quickly," he said.

Exports can be made without payment of IGST, i.e., through letter of understanding (LUT) or bond. All applications of LUT and bonds should be accepted within three working days.

For those who export goods on payment of IGST, no separate refund claim is required. The shipping bill itself is a claim application. However, Mr. Ramesh said that export general manifest should be provided without any error so that the system could automatically process the refund.

"In many cases, lack of EGM, failure to provide right bank details led to failure in validation of the refund claim," he said.

Besides, he said that e-sealing of containers was made mandatory from January 1, 2018. The e-sealing would be done through radio frequency identification seals that would carry details of the materials being exported and details of the exporter, time and date of sealing. "Any tampering of the seal will lead to manual verification of goods," he said.

This process of e-sealing ensured ease in exports and would save time for the exporter. Only those consignments that are selected by risk management division would be manually examined. Assistant Commissioners, A. Muthiah (CGST and CE), V. Rajkumar Moses (Customs) were among those who spoke.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for a new skill development scheme covering the entire value chain of the textile sector excluding Spinning & Weaving in organized Sector, titled “Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SCBTS)” from 2017-18 to 2019-20 with an outlay of Rs. 1300 crore. The scheme will have National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) compliant training courses with funding norms as per the Common Norms notified by Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).

The objectives of the scheme are to provide demand driven, placement oriented skilling programme to incentivize the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organized textile and related sectors; to promote skilling and skill up-gradation in the traditional sectors through respective Sectoral Divisions/organizations of Ministry of Textiles; and to provide livelihood to all sections of the society across the country.

The skilling programmes would be implemented through:

- i. Textile Industry /Units in order to meet the in-house requirement of manpower;
- ii. Reputed training institutions relevant to textile sector having placement tie-ups with textile industry/units; and
- iii. Institutions of Ministry of Textiles /State Governments having placement tie-ups with textile industry/units.

The scheme will broadly adopt the following strategy:

- (a) Job role wise skilling targets will be based on skill gap identified for various levels i.e. Entry level courses, Up-skilling/ Re-skilling (supervisor, managerial training, advanced courses for adapting technology etc.), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Training of Trainers, Entrepreneurship Development.
- (b) Segment Wise/ Job role wise requirement of skill needs will be assessed from time to time in consultation with the industry.
- (c) Web-based monitoring will be adopted for steering every aspect of implementation of the programme.
- (d) Skilling requirement in the traditional sectors such as handlooms, handicrafts, jute, silk etc. will be considered as special projects through respective Sectoral Divisions/organizations. Skill upgradation will be

supported further for entrepreneurial development through provision of MUDRA loans.

(e) With a view to make outcomes measurable, successful trainees will be assessed and certified by an accredited Assessment Agency.

(f) At least 70% of the certified trainees are to be placed in the wage employment. Post Placement tracking will be mandatory under the scheme.

(g) Acknowledging the high levels of employment of women in the sector post training, all partner institutions will be required to comply with the guidelines regarding Internal Complaints Committee to be constituted under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition & Redressal) Act, 2013 to become eligible for funding under the scheme.

The scheme will be implemented for the benefit of all sections of the society across the country including rural, remote, LWE affected, North East, J&K by imparting skills in the identified job roles. Preference will be given to various social groups, SC, ST, differently abled, minorities and other vulnerable groups. Under previous scheme of skill development implemented by the Ministry of Textiles in the XII Plan period, more than 10 lakh people have been trained of which more than 70% were women. Considering that the apparel industry, a major segment to be covered under the scheme, employs majorly women (about 70%), the trend is likely to be continued in the new scheme.

10 lakh people are expected to be skilled and certified in various segments of Textile Sector through the scheme, out of which 1 lakh will be in traditional sectors.

Govt clears Rs 1,300-cr skill dev scheme for textile sector

Money Control

<http://www.moneycontrol.com/news/india/govt-clears-rs-1300-cr-skill-dev-scheme-for-textile-sector-2465883.html>

The Union Cabinet today approved a new skill development scheme having an outlay of Rs 1,300 crore with an aim to create jobs in the organised textile and related sectors. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi here.

The scheme will cover the entire value chain of textiles, excluding spinning and weaving in the organised sector.

Around 10 lakh people are expected to be skilled and certified in various segments of the textile sector through the scheme, out of which 1 lakh will be in traditional sectors, an official statement said. At least 70 per cent of the certified trainees are to be placed in the wage employment and post-placement tracking will be mandatory

under the scheme, it added. "The Cabinet approves a new skill development scheme covering the entire value chain of the textile sector excluding Spinning & Weaving in the organised sector, titled 'Scheme for Capacity Building', the statement said. The scheme will have National Skill Qualification Framework compliant training courses with funding norms as per the Common Norms notified by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

The objectives of the scheme are to provide demand driven, placement-oriented skilling programme to incentivise the efforts of the industry in creating jobs in the organised textile and related sectors, it said. The scheme is aimed at promoting skilling and skill up-gradation in the traditional sectors through the Ministry of Textiles and providing livelihood to all sections of the society across the country. The skilling programmes would be implemented through textile industry/units in order to meet the in-house requirement of manpower.

It will also be rolled out through reputed training institutions relevant to textile sector having placement tie-ups with textile industry or units, and institutions of the Ministry of Textiles or state governments having placement tie-ups with textile industry or units. Under the scheme, job role wise skilling targets will be based on skill gap identified for various levels including entry-level courses, up-skilling/re-skilling (supervisor, managerial training, advanced courses for adapting technology etc), recognition of prior learning (RPL).

Moreover, segment/job role wise requirement of skill needs will be assessed from time to time in consultation with the industry. Web-based monitoring will be adopted for steering every aspect of implementation of the programme. The skilling requirement in the traditional sectors such as handlooms, handicrafts, jute, silk etc will be considered as special projects through respective sectoral divisions/ organisations.

Skill upgradation will be supported further for entrepreneurial development through provision of MUDRA loans. The scheme will be implemented for the benefit of all sections of the society across the country including rural, remote, LWE affected, North East, J&K by imparting skills in the identified job roles. Preference will be given to various social groups, SC, ST, differently abled, minorities and other vulnerable groups. Under previous scheme of skill development implemented by the Ministry of Textiles in the XII Plan period, more than 10 lakh people have been trained of which more than 70 per cent were women. "Considering that the apparel industry, a major segment to be covered under the scheme, employs majorly women (about 70 per cent), the trend is likely to be continued in the new scheme," said the statement.

Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has announced relief and financial assistance for cotton farmers in the state affected by the pink bollworm attack on the crop in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions. The CM made this announcement at the ongoing Assembly session in Nagpur. In addition to crop insurance and assistance from the government, farmers will also receive compensation from seed companies, state agriculture minister Pandurang Fundkar said. Every cotton farmers whose crop has been affected by pink bollworm shall be given assistance from the government and not a single farmer shall die due to this crisis, he announced in the state Assembly. "Those farmers who are eligible to receive crop insurance will be granted the benefit of the scheme and seed companies will be told to pay compensation to farmers," he said. The Relief and Rehabilitation Ministry has begun conducting panchnamas of cotton crop and farmers shall be given assistance through this medium. Fadnavis said that 5 lakh applications had come from farmers. Some may get assistance from all the three schemes — from the government, from the companies and crop insurance amount. "The panchnamas are nearing completion and we shall take decisions soon," he said. With the crisis triggered by the attack of pink bollworms on cotton crop in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions becoming severe, opposition parties are now demanding Rs 25,000 per acre as compensation for framers. The leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Legislative Council, Dhananjay Munde, told reporters that a compensation of more than Rs 25,000 is a must, and that he had personally written to the CM, when the Centre had warned about the pink bollworm attack, he said. The actual extent of cotton crop damage is still being evaluated. The chairman of Maharashtra government's special task force on the agrarian crisis, Kishore Tiwari, has estimated the loss at Rs 10,000crore in Vidarbha and Marathwada. Tiwari said that the government should clarify the quantum of financial assistance to the farmers. Giving Rs 400-500 per acre as compensation is not going to help, he said. Pasha Patel, chairman of State Agriculture Price Commission, said that the actual cotton crops losses are still being evaluated and that the state government is willing to provide compensation to the farmers.

Preliminary reports suggest that farmers in Marathwada are better covered under cotton crop insurance than those in Vidarbha, he said. Patel suggested that the seed companies that have been making profits over the years must now take the lead and provide some monetary compensation to cotton farmers. Cotton farmers in Maharashtra are set to lose nearly 13 % of their output this year due to pink bollworm attacks on the standing crop in major production regions of the state. The textiles ministry estimates a 13% decline in the average cotton yield in Maharashtra with major crop losses in Yavatmal and Jalgaon districts. As per industry sources, around a third of Maharashtra's cotton area were under attack by pink bollworm. Cotton farmers have voiced their concern over crop losses and have dragged seed companies to court seeking damages. The government has issued advisories to farmers to avoid third pluckings and burn up the remaining crop to avoid further infestation of pink bollworm.

Officials to check sale of genetically-modified cotton seeds in Telangana

Indian Express

<http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/teelangana/2017/dec/20/officials-to-check-sale-of-genetically-modified-cotton-seeds-in-teelangana-1732005.html>

AS the illegal sale of genetically-modified cotton seeds, Bollgard 3, continues unabated in Telangana, agriculture officials are gearing up to check such sale by undertaking inspections in the next harvest season (around May).The checks will be conducted across the state.In Vikarabad a meeting was convened recently by former collector (now transferred to Adilabad) where she asked agriculture officials to ensure that the sale of GM cotton seeds in the district be stopped by May next.

“Teams consisting of officials from 18 mandals in the district, including the assistant director of agriculture, will be formed to carry out inspections. We will ensure that the sale of these seeds in Vikarabad is brought to an end by the next harvest season,” said district agriculture officer Gopal. Rythu Samanvaya Samithi volunteers can also play a role in this mission, he added.

The herbicide-tolerant seed is being used in about 25 per cent of the cotton-sowing area in the state and was first heard of in 2008. Illegal sale of the seed is also widespread in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh.District agriculture officer A Vivek said, “The sale of GM cotton seeds has been widespread in the district for years but it has been brought down with our constant efforts to make the farmers aware about the ill effects of the seed and by discouraging them from buying it. We have asked the police to be alert to the activities of dealers who package these seeds.”

Vikarabad agriculture officials said the production of cotton in the district is marginal and Bollgard 3 is not used for cultivation there. In Mahbubnagar, after the arrest of two dealers for illegal sale of Bollgard 3, no further steps have been taken. Agricultural scientist GV Ramanjaneyulu, when asked about regulatory steps, said, “The government should immediately track the firms which are producing and selling these seeds.”