

Pepsico terms favourable

From The Tribune Bureau

CHANDIGARH, Feb 12 — The American multinational, Pepsi Cola, has agreed to much better terms than its agreements with the Soviet Union and China for setting up a processed fruit and vegetable joint venture in Punjab.

This was announced here today by Mr Manohar Singh Gill, Financial Commissioner, Development, at a Meet-the-Press programme at the Chandigarh Press Club. Mr Gill said the Pepsi's agreements with the two Communist countries were based on a 1:1 export commitment. In India's case, the ratio was going to be 5:1. Mr Gill was confident that the proposed tie-up between the Punjab Agro Industries Cor-

poration, the Tatas and the Pepsico could bring in more than Rs 200 crore in foreign exchange.

In the original proposal, the joint venture projected an export to import ratio of 3:1 for a five-year term. Under the new commitment, the venture would export 50 per cent of its total annual turnover. This was estimated to net foreign exchange earnings of five times the value of total imports. In addition the venture had agreed to extend its export obligation period to 10 years instead of the usual five years.

The composition of exports was also very significant. Current exports of processed foods were mainly mango pulp, pickles and

chutneys to ethnic and soft currency markets around the world. This venture would put India on the map as an exporter of non-traditional processed fruits and vegetables. Total exports of fruit and vegetable concentrates from Punjab would increase to over Rs 10 crore a year from the present national aggregate of Rs 9 lakh only (in 1984-85). This venture would give India a foothold in a highly competitive world market which was estimated to be worth Rs 8,000 crore annually today. If countries like Brazil could penetrate these markets significantly, there was no reason why India could not do so too, but this re-

Continued on page 16 col 6

Tieup to boost farming: Gill

Continued from page 1 col 5

quired a concentrated effort to develop volume production to match international requirements of price and quality.

At the present time, Mr Gill said, India processed only 0.3 per cent of its fruits and vegetables compared to about 80 to 70 per cent in countries like Brazil and Mexico. The venture expected to utilise some 100,000 tonnes per year of fruit and vegetables which was the kind of volume necessary to bring about a substantial shift towards horticultural crops. This was essential if the present cycle of stagnant farm yields and high input costs had to be broken and for farmers to increase the earnings from their farms. Earnings from cereal crops now averaged some Rs 7000 per hectare which could rise to between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000 per hectare from horticultural crops. The assured offtake by the venture would also help increase farmer income through the elimination of middlemen and reduction of wastage.

According to the export committee, on diversification of agriculture set up by the Punjab Government, there were strong reasons for the State to reduce excessive dependence on wheat and rice on ecological considerations also. The two crop system repeated year after year for the last about one and a half decades on an extensive scale had made the agro-eco-system of the State extremely fragile in the context of pests and crop diseases, soil health, human health and the overall living environment.

A shift to horticulture would help balance the cropping pattern.

Kisan leader demands power supply

From Our Correspondent

JALANDHAR, Feb 12 — Mr Mohan Singh Jandiala, President, Punjab Kisan Sabha, in a statement issued here today pressed upon the Punjab Government and the Punjab State Electricity Board to supply uninterrupted power for 12 hours daily for the next 15 days to run tubewells.

Mr Jandiala said farmers knew there was a shortage of power due to the absence of the winter rains but their wheat and other rabi crops needed irrigation.

He also expressed concern over the non-disbursement of the paddy bonus announced in September last. He regretted that even the cheques issued to farmers could not be encashed for various reasons.

He urged the Government to give adequate relief to farmers whose wheat crop had been damaged last year and also to agriculture labourers who remained without relief.

At present, just 1.9 per cent of Punjab's cropped area was under horticulture. This was less than a third of the already low national average of 6.5 per cent. The Expert Committee had, therefore, not only advocated that the area under fruit and vegetable crops should be substantially increased i.e. 6.25 per cent by the year 2000, but had strongly recommended the establishment of largescale processing facilities and marketing support for export, preferably in the private sector.

Foreign collaboration was necessary, argued Mr Gill, for achieving the quality standards required for international markets along with access to international marketing. There were many food processing ventures already in the country which were either closed or working far below capacity due to insufficient understanding and access to proper marketing. Significant amongst such ventures was a project set up some five years ago

between PAIC and Voltas for processing fruit products in Abohar. This project was set up with indigenous technology with an investment of Rs 4 crore. It was the experience from running this plant which led to the association with Pepsico.

A very important aspect in the development of processed foods and particularly approach international markets in terms of price and quality, was the need for improvements in farming practices and the introduction of new seed varieties. This required extensive interaction with farmers to introduce new seeds and techniques to result in both increased yields and the growth of new varieties of crops better suited for processing. This was sought to be achieved through a research centre which would be set up as an integral part

Buffalo embryo transfer

From Our Staff Correspondent

LUDHIANA: Experiments have been initiated at Punjab Agricultural University for non-surgical embryo transfer in buffaloes in collaboration with Bulgaria.

This is the first time that such experiments are being conducted in India. Experts have succeeded in transferring embryos at the university campus and some villages in Ludhiana district. India is the third country in the world where such experiments have been done.

The Bulgarian team is headed by Dr A. Alexiev, Director of the Buffalo Breeding Centre at Shumen; Dr Karalivanov and Mr Peter Radev (technician). The PAU team is headed by Dr S.S. Gill, Additional Director of Research (Animal Sciences); Dr M.S. Tiwana, Head of the Animal Sciences Department; and Dr Mehar Singh.

Both teams have been busy since February 1, preparing 16 donors and 30 recipients. The Bulgarian experts have selected 50 buffaloes from the university herd and those of the Central Institute of Research in Buffaloes, Nabha, and farmers of Thamanwal village in Jalandhar district.

Dr Gill told a visiting Press party on Thursday that 14 buffaloes had already been inseminated with 16 embryos. Normally the life of a buffalo was 15 years, during which she had seven or eight calves under the natural reproductive behaviour. However, through the technique of embryo transfer, a healthy buffalo may have 100 to 150 calves.

The embryo transfer technique had great importance for India as this could fetch a lot of foreign exchange from the sale of germ plasma, he added.

Dr Alexiev said the Indian germ plasma was the best in the world; Bulgaria had an exchange of scientists with India, and some experts of PAU visited Bulgaria.

According to Dr Gill, there are 125 million buffaloes in the world with India having 68.4 million. PAU has raised a herd of 300 buffaloes known for 365 days of lactation with a yield of 2,300 kg per head. There are about 70 buffaloes with a lactation yield of 3,000 to 4,000 kg.

Embryo transfer has already been introduced in cows in India. Four calves were born to a cow at the IARI campus and three at the National Dairy Development Board campus.

CPI concern over spurt in killings

From Our Correspondent

AMBITSAR, Feb 12 — The District Council of the CPI has expressed its grave concern over the recent spurt in terrorists killings in the district and elsewhere in the State.

At a meeting held here yesterday, and presided over by Mr Piar Singh Deora, Secretary, the State Council, it was said that rural areas of the district had been virtually handed over to the mercy of the terrorists as there was no patrolling by security forces at night.

of the project and which would have access to the extensive research which Pepsico had undertaken worldwide to support their own requirements of fruits and vegetables.

According to Mr Gill, the venture also had a symbolic value. For one thing, it spoke of the confidence vested in Punjab by a leading Indian business house and a reputed international firm. The venture would also have a beneficial effect on the State's troubled environment. It would generate employment for over 50,000 people, of which 20,000 would be in Punjab. It would utilise the produce of an estimated 5,000 farmers.

A small but significant aspect of the joint venture was the proposal to manufacture and market soft drink concentrates. Mr Gill dismissed the controversy surrounding it as the work of the domestic soft drinks lobby. Nearly 74 per cent of the venture was fruit and vegetable related. To ensure that this focus was retained, the partners had been persuaded to limit the soft drink portion of the venture to 25 per cent of total turnover. Domestic soft drinks makers were unnecessarily threatened by joint venture.

Mr Gill said that the concentrate for the soft drink would be entirely manufactured within the country by the joint venture. This was the first time that Pepsico had ever agreed to licence the manufacture of concentrate in a venture where it had only a minority shareholding. Even in the case of the Soviet Union and China, the concentrate was entirely imported. Efforts would be made to use indigenous raw materials as far as possible and only such raw materials would be imported which were not available in the country and which were being allowed to be imported by other soft drink manufacturers.

School board to help handicapped

From Our Correspondent

S.A.S. NAGAR, Feb 12 — The Punjab School Education Board will provide financial assistance to the orthopaedically handicapped students of the ninth class of Punjab.

According to Mr Jaswant Singh, Secretary of the board, students studying in Government and recognised schools only are eligible for this assistance. The students concerned have to apply alongwith a medical certificate showing percentage of the handicap. This certificate will be issued by the Civil Surgeon, Senior Medical Officer, Assistant Civil Surgeon, P.C.M.S., M.D., Orthopaedic Surgeon etc.

The students who have already applied are required to apply afresh on the prescribed forms by February 15, 1988.