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Two copra procurement centres soon

Staff Reporter

A copra procurement centre would be opened in Palani and an additional centre at Karamadai, said Collector N. Venkatachalam.

Presiding over an agriculturists' meeting at the Collectorate here on Friday, he said that the Palani centre would serve coconut growers in Erode, Tiruchi, Pollachi, and Dindigul district.

A paddy procurement centre would also be opened at Karamadai to bolster the centres at Ayakudi, Kothaimangalam, Balasamudram, Kalayamputhur and Neikarapatti. A tripartite meeting among farmers, pulp manufacturers, and officials would be convened to discuss on marketing mango pulp.

Replying to a complaint on water pollution, Mr. Venkatachalam warned a processing unit at Ezhuvanampatti not to let treated effluents into an irrigation channel. Farmers from R. Kombai appealed to the Collector to set up a marketing centre for medicinal plants, and those from Gujiliamparai union put forth a plea to issue land pattas.

The district received 1.67 mm of rain against the average of 60.4 mm till March. Storage in irrigation tanks was not encouraging. Of the 2,065 rain-fed tanks, five per cent had water that could irrigate lands for three to four months, 20 per cent of tanks for two to three hours only, and the rest with insufficient storage.

Similarly, 10 per cent of the 91,488 tanks in the district could irrigate lands for three to four hours and another 10 per cent for two to three hours, and 80 percent for one to two hours. Farmers should use water judiciously and raise short-term crops, he advised.

Farmers want procurement of broken copra at complex

Special Correspondent



consider our pleas: A farmer showing broken copra to Collector K. Baskaran at the farmers' grievances day meeting at the collectorate in Thanjavur on Friday. Photo: B. Velankanni Raj

Samba harvest has been completed in the district and an average yield of 6,656 kg per hectare has been recorded by farmers this year, said K. Baskaran, Collector, here on Friday.

At the monthly farmers' grievances day meeting at the collectorate, Mr. Baskaran said samba and thaladi cultivation was taken up in 1,81,317 hectares this year of which System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method was adopted in 99,504 hectares. Under SRI, a farmer from Budalur has registered a record yield of 13,617 kg per hectare.

Savarimuthu, a farmer from Pattukottai, thanked the Collector for the efforts he had made to introduce copra procurement by Tamil Nadu Cooperative Marketing Federation (TANFED) on behalf of National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED) at Pattukottai and Peravurani.

He urged the collector to visit the coconut commercial complex at Pattukottai to see the procurement of copra.

He also appealed to the Collector to instruct the procurement centres to receive broken copra though such copra brought by farmers are rejected.

Marketing federation officials said they would write to NAFED about the demand and try to get relaxation of norms with respect to quality of copra procured at the centres. The Collector said copra procurement centre has been opened at Peravurani and procurement is going on at Peravurani now.

The Collector also said for summer pulses season, 210 tonnes of pulses seeds have been distributed so far under National Agriculture Development Scheme and National Food Security Scheme.

There is a stock of 92 tonnes of ADT5 black gram seeds at all agriculture extension centres in the district. Stock of fertilisers is adequate in the district with 2,760 tonnes of urea, 4,160 tonnes of Di Ammonium Phosphate, 2,086 tonnes of potash, and 3,578 tonnes of complex in cooperative and private sectors.

Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) has procured 5,82,557 tonnes of paddy this kharif season - from October 1, 2011 to March 27, 2012.

Power supply

V.Jeevakumar, a farmer from Royamundanpatti, said power supply should be given to agriculture pumpsets continuously for eight hours.

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Mani for big leap in farming sector

Staff Reporter

Sufficient funds will be made available for the land acquisition for Calicut International Airport, Finance Minister K.M. Mani has said here on Friday. He was speaking at a face-to-face programme organised by the Malabar Chamber of Commerce at Hotel Malabar Palace here.

Mr. Mani said a separate fund for the purpose was not announced in the budget since it was an already existing project. "The allocation need not be particularly announced in all the successive budgets for the ongoing projects," he said.

Detailing his plans to completely modernise the agricultural sector in the State in five years, the Minister said the new budget had laid stress on this in every possible way. Stating that the agricultural sector of the State needed to be made self-reliant in a time-bound fashion, Mr. Mani said the decision to establish three coconut bio-parks in the State and the proposed 'greenhouse project' were taken up to achieve this.

He said the greenhouse project envisaged the production of different varieties of vegetables in different parts of the State round the year. Over 3,000 green houses — as many as three each in every panchayat — would be set up this year as part of the project.

“A greenhouse can be set up in five cents of appropriate land with an investment of Rs. 5 lakh. “The government is planning to develop as many as 1 lakh greenhouses across the state in five years,” he said.

Claiming that the project would bring about a dramatic change in the very nature of agriculture in the State in a few years, Mr. Mani said it would also be a major step forward in achieving self-reliance in vegetable production.

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Seminar held on medicinal plants

Staff Reporter

The Aditya Pharmacy Institutions, Surampalem, on Friday held seminar on biological activity of medicinal plants and research methodology.

Kaleb Asres, a researcher on medicinal plants in Ethiopia, delivered the talk on medicinal plants. He is a professor of Addis Ababa University.

A large number of plants in Africa and India, which contain the important therapeutic content to counter the diseases such as cancer and tuberculosis, remained unexplored.

He explained the systematic procedures that should be adopted for the success in isolating therapeutically active molecules form medicinal plants.

He said that his research group could isolate useful compounds from plants such as Medilotus Elegance and Combretum molle for treating malaria and inflammation.

He said that pharmaceutical companies were encouraging research on medical plants. In another session, Veeresham, professor of Kakaktiya University, delivered a lecture on the steps to be taken by the researchers to achieve the success in scientific research.

He mentioned that research in pharmaceutical sciences was in demand and it needs careful planning to achieve the objectives.

Rs.100 per quintal wheat bonus for Rajasthan farmers

Special Correspondent

Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot on Friday announced a bonus of Rs.100 for farmers for every quintal of wheat sold under the minimum support price (MSP). The Government has set aside Rs.150 crore for the purpose. The announcement came during his reply to the debate in the Assembly on the Budget, along with a long list of new schemes in irrigation and drinking water, scholarships for meritorious students from poor and incentives for sports persons.

Mr. Gehlot said the procurement of wheat from farmers under MSP was to the tune of 13.5 lakh metric tones in the State in the current year. The procurement target for the next year through the Food Corporation of India is 15 lakh metric tones. He raised the allocation for subsidy on setting up crop processing units in the individual farms from Rs.2 crore to Rs.20 crore and announced the inclusion of horticulture products and cash crops such as spices in the scheme.

Mr. Gehlot withdrew the entry tax on yarn he introduced in the Budget and retained it only in the case of polyester viscose yarn and made the cotton purchase of spinning and ginning companies under the State run Spinfed free from VAT. He also announced introduction of UGC scale for lecturers of Sanskrit colleges. The daily allowances for players participating in State and national events have been raised to Rs.200 and Rs.300 respectively.

Referring to the comments of some members who participated in the debate including the Deputy Leader of the Opposition Ghanshyam Tiwari, Mr. Gehlot dismissed the charge that he had mid-term Parliamentary elections in mind while formulating the Budget. Mr. Gehlot defended imposing 50 per cent tax on tobacco items and quipped: "I thought the Opposition would appreciate this tax. If I had my way I would have banned sale and use of tobacco altogether in the State". On this Mr. Tiwari clarified that he had no objection to this particular decision but had opposed the hike in the DLC rates. Responding to this, Mr. Gehlot said the official land rates were hiked to help the farmers to get more money.

In tune with the general mood of the House during the debate, Mr. Gehlot acted on the school education front and announced upgrading of 200 upper primary schools to middle schools and 200 middle schools to Higher Secondary Schools. In addition science and commerce subjects would be introduced in 100 Higher Secondary Schools from the coming year.

Mr. Gehlot added a new dimension to the scheme to gift laptops to meritorious students made in the Budget speech, and announced a monthly scholarship of Rs.500 to the first one lakh students coming in merit (whose family income is less than Rs.1 lakh a year) in the school leaving examinations. This scholarship will continue for five years during the higher studies.

Another major announcement was in the form of drinking water scheme -- Fatehpur-Laxmangarh scheme -- for Sikar district covering 283 villages at a cost of Rs.832 crores under the National Rural Drinking Water Programme.

The other irrigation projects found listed in the reply include Barmer Lift Scheme (Second Cluster) to benefit 68 villages, Bisalpur-Dudu scheme, a Rs.58 crore scheme to bring the Narmada waters to Jalore town and schemes for Piapd town, Manaklao-Dantiwada Stage II and Ghati-Semlia scheme.

Anicuts and minor irrigation scheme have been announced for Dungarpur district, including a bridge at Aspur to reach Adivasi pilgrimage site, Baneshwar dham.

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Inflationary expectations to be 6-7%: Pranab

Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee on Saturday said that inflationary expectations would be in the six to seven % range.

"My inflationary expectations will be between six and seven % and not below that," Mukherjee said. He said that if the inflationary expectations were below that, then it would lead to stagflation and growth would be hampered.

Mukherjee said that inflation had been moderated and would be taken into account during formulation of policy rates.

"I hope the RBI will keep this in view while making policy rates formulation," he noted.

He said that inflation had been perilously close to double-digit for nearly two years and food inflation was as high as 22 %.

"I had to take corrective measures as these high figures were not desirable," he said.

In February, inflation as measured on the Wholesale Price Index (WPI) rose to 6.95 %, against 6.55 % in the previous month.

Mukherjee said that the 2012-13 Budget was placed with a view of fiscal consolidation, moderation of inflation and bringing back India to a higher trajectory of sustainable growth.

Regarding improving private sector sentiments, he said that DTC would be introduced next year after examination of recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee.

Mukherjee said that if fiscal consolidation was achieved, then the private sector's elbow room for borrowing would improve substantially.

The finance minister said that he had tried to mop up additional resources to give credibility to fiscal consolidation efforts and also to meet the objective of reaching Goods and Services Tax (GST).

The cardinal principle of GST was to bring in alignment of taxes for which the excise and services tax had been brought at par in the Budget for 2012-13.

He said that he was not able to make any dramatic announcement and decision in the Budget.

Stating that since 1989, the Indian electorate had been giving a fractured mandate with no party having clear majority, he said "You can have the power to rule, but you will have to take others together. So within these constraints, I had to formulate the proposals."

Regarding food and fertiliser subsidies, he said that in the Budget it was said that it would be selective.

"We have to provide food subsidy and in other areas. It will linked to the capacity of paying," he said.

"I have pegged the subsidy burden at two % of GDP," he said.

Mukherjee said that the last increase in oil prices was in June 2011.

"There has been no price escalation since then," he said.

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'Inflationary expectations to be 6-7%'

Agencies Posted online: Sat Mar 31 2012, 16:39 hrs



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THE ECONOMIC TIMES

31 MAR, 2012, 12.42AM IST, BLOOMBERG

EU pact on bigger fund boosts oil

MELBOURNE: Crude oil advanced in New York on Friday, heading for a second quarterly gain, as Europe's finance ministers agreed to increase rescue funds to temper the region's debt crisis.

Crude rose as much as 0.9%, the first gain in three days, as consumer spending in the US jumped in February by the most in seven months, showing the biggest part of the economy is strengthening. Prices fell 2.5% on Thursday, the biggest drop since December.

European equities extended the biggest first-quarter advance since 2006 and the euro gained while default risk fell. For the week, prices are lower after US stockpiles climbed to the highest level since August and Western countries discussed tapping emergency reserves.

Oil for May delivery gained as much as 91 cents to \$103.69 a barrel in electronic trading on the NYME. It was at \$103.58 at 1:47 pm London time, up 4.8% for the quarter. That would follow a gain of 25% in the last quarter of 2011. US purchases climbed 0.8%, the most since July, Commerce Department figures showed on Friday in Washington.

The median estimate of economists surveyed by Bloomberg News called for a 0.6% increase. Incomes advanced less than projected, sending the saving rate down to the lowest level in more than two years.

Prices slumped on Thursday to \$102.78, the lowest close since February 16. West Texas Intermediate futures are down 3.1% this week for a third weekly decline, the longest losing streak since August.

Brent oil for May settlement gained \$1.21, or 1%, to \$123.60 a barrel on the London-based ICE Futures Europe exchange. The European benchmark contract's premium to New York- traded WTI was at \$20.02, compared with Thursday's close of \$19.61, the widest settlement in five months.

New York crude settled below its lower Bollinger Band for the first time in almost two months on Thursday, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. This indicator is at \$103.40 a barrel on Friday.

31 MAR, 2012, 10.59AM IST, REUTERS

NCDEX imposes special margin on soybean, pepper

MUMBAI: National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) has imposed a 10 per cent special margin on soybean and pepper contracts from April 3 to control excessive price volatility, after the regulator banned guar trade earlier this week.

The NCDEX will convert 5 per cent additional margin on pepper into cash margin, the exchange said in a statement. Soybeans

has gained more than 19.25 per cent since the start of the year and pepper has gained 17.85 per cent.

The commodity market regulator had banned trading in guar gum and seed contracts after prices rose 10-fold last year.

Commodity futures trade, which started about nine years ago in India, has witnessed bans and re-listings of various farm products such as wheat, chick peas and sugar after what was seen as excessive speculation. Other agri-commodities like rice and other pulses are yet to get re-listed.

Oil traders seek protection from high seed prices

BS Reporter / Mumbai March 31, 2012, 0:35 IST

Faced with crushing margins turning negative once again due to a spurt in oilseed prices, traders have urged the government to curb excessive speculation in raw materials in futures exchanges. Edible oil producers have cautiously passed on a part of the seed price rise to oil consumers amid fear of a demand slump.

The rapeseed/mustard seed price for near-month delivery on the National Commodity & Derivatives Exchange has gone up 19 per cent in the last two months, to trade currently at Rs 3,921 a quintal. Similarly, the commodity in the Jaipur spot market jumped to Rs 3,870 a quintal on March 24, as compared to Rs 3,240 a quintal on February 1. Mustard oil prices during the period have surged 14 per cent to quote at Rs 82.5 a kg on March 24, as compared to Rs 71.3 a kg on February 1. "During the last two months, speculative activities have gone up in RM seed, with trade volume surging to 183,360 tonnes on March 24 as compared to 91,420 tonnes in the beginning of February," said Sushil Goenka, president, Solvent Extractors' Association.