

Farmers picket Collectors' offices in delta districts



Members of farmers' associations affiliated to Left parties on Monday picketed offices of District Collectors of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam, demanding a compensation of Rs.25,000 per acre to farmers. They also demanded that the delta region be declared as 'disaster hit'. The agitation went on all through the day and the associations maintained that the stir was indefinite.

In Thanjavur, a section of the agitators tried to break through barricades seeking to enter the Collector's Office. As the police tried to restrain them, the farmers surged forward leading to minor scuffles.

Subsequently, the agitators squatted on the road. Traffic on the Court Road in the town was disrupted for the entire day. Representatives of the agitators later presented a memorandum to Collector K. Baskaran. Among other demands were payment of Rs. 10,000 each to the family of farm labourers, Rs.10 lakh to the kin of farmers who were said to have committed suicide. They also urged the Centre to declare the delta districts disaster-hit; sanction Rs. 1,000 crore for the delta and gazette the final award of the Cauvery Tribunal immediately. Hundreds of cadres of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, All India Vivasaya Thozhilalargal Sangam and Communist Party of India (Marxist) picketed the district collectorates in Thanjavur and Tiruvarur.

P.Shanmugham, State general secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, who led the agitation along with S.Thirunavukarasu, Vice-President, All India Vivasaya Thozhilalargal Sangam, said: “We will continue the agitation till a decision is taken by the committee formed by the State government under Minister O.Panneerselvam,” he said.

A.Lazer, State president of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, who led the agitation in Tiruvarur said the government’s announcement of relief package was not adequate..

S.Prabakaran, Superintendent of Police (in-charge), escorted a team of the farmers representatives to the meet the Collector S.Natarajan. In Nagapattinam, agitators led by K.Balakrishnan, State president of Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, staged a massive blockade outside the Collectorate. The associations also demanded Rs.15,000 for fields that were left uncultivated fearing water shortage. Women and men affiliated to the All India Kisan Sabha, All India Agricultural Workers Union, and Tamil Nadu Vivasaya Thozhilalar Sangam, supported by CITU members, blocked the stretch outside the Collectorate along the Nagore road.

Mr.Balakrishnan said, “This is the first time an indefinite blockade was being taken up,” Mr.Balakrishnan said. A three member-team led by CPI (M) MLA Nagai Maali, met the Collector to present their demands.

Swaminathan: science can lead to evergreen revolution in agriculture



Calling upon the scientific community to double its efforts in harnessing science to meet challenges in food, nutrition and water, renowned agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan said here on Monday that science could lead to “evergreen revolution in agriculture” aimed at increasing productivity without associated ecological or social harm.

Dr. Swaminathan, also the senior-most former president of the Indian Science Congress Association, was speaking to delegates at the valedictory session of 100th Indian Science Congress held in the city from January 3 to 7. “The future in my view belongs to the country with grains, not guns,” he said, adding that India had come a long way from “ship-to-mouth” existence to “conferring the legal right of food to all with home grown food” under the proposed National Food Security Bill of India.

Referring to concerns over the rise in prices of fertilizers expressed by many, including Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, he said the fertilizer-use efficiency was very low in the country at 48 per cent. “It can be increased to 90 per cent using scientific methods,” Dr. Swaminathan said.

He later told journalists that agricultural produce from one kilogram of urea could be doubled by adopting scientific processes.

Calling for an increase in agricultural productivity in the State, Dr. Swaminathan said West Bengal, Bihar and Assam were the sleeping giants of Indian agriculture with enormous potential to increase productivity.

Stating that empowerment of women in agriculture required special attention, he said he had introduced a Private Member’s Bill in the Rajya Sabha that would ensure certain basic entitlements for women.

Mammoth problem for farmers in Sathyamangalam forests



The human-elephant conflict in Sathyamangalam forests has reached an alarming proportion with the jumbos killing three persons in the last two weeks.

A farmer guarding the crops in his field at Iruttipalayam village was the latest victim of the conflict. The farmer, Rangasamy (40), saw three elephants raiding the crops and attempted to chase them back into the forest with the help of two of his neighbours. But the elephants did not move. Instead, they attacked the farmer and crushed him to death.

On January 3, Chen Nanja (55), a resident of Neithalpuram village near Kadambur, was looking after his cattle grazing near the forests when an elephant attacked him. He suffered serious injuries and died in a hospital in Coimbatore.

A woman resident of Vinoba Nagar, who was returning home from a fair price shop, was killed by an elephant on December 31.

Fear grips the villages close to the forests after these incidents. "We are spending sleepless nights as herds of elephants continue to raid the crops in the fields, causing severe damage, and killing those who stand in their way," said N. Nanjappan, a farmer in Kunderipallam area. A few days ago, a herd of elephants entered his field and damaged the banana crop.

Farmers in Bhavanisagar, Kadambur, Punjai Puliampatti, Thalavadi and Thalamalai areas are the worst affected due to frequent intrusions.

Many farmers, who earlier used to guard the crops at night, now avoid doing so. In many places, residents have to be indoors as early as 6 p.m. to avoid being seen by the jumbos.

Shortage of water in the forest and the easy availability of fodder in the forest fringes are the primary reasons that make elephants stray from forest areas. "The poor rainfall has left many water sources in the forests dry and the elephants are coming out in large numbers in search of water and food. Once the elephants come out of their habitat and get used to the food crops, it becomes a habit for them. Farmers grow sugarcane, banana and other crops that attract the elephants and this leads to an increase in the conflict," a senior forests official points out.

"An adult elephant needs at least 200 to 250 kg of food and 100 to 150 litres of water. Elephants stray out as there is less fodder and water inside the forests," says Assistant Professor of wildlife biology B. Ramakrishnan.

The measures taken by the Forest department, including elephant proof trenches, did not produce expected results. The solar-powered fencing showed a positive result. “But not all the farmers have installed solar-powered fence,” another forest official said. Wildlife activists said the effective way to minimise the conflict was to remove encroachments on the elephant corridors and change the crop pattern on the forest fringes.

“The communities should be sensitised to the increasing conflict and they should be asked not to cultivate food crops in their fields abutting forests. Without their cooperation, we cannot produce a sustainable solution to the conflict,” says Mr. Ramakrishnan.

6 watersheds coming up



Six watersheds adjoining the Western Ghats would be developed on an outlay of Rs.2.50 crore under the Western Ghats Development Programme, R. Vijayakumar, Secretary, Department of Planning and Development, said.

Chairing a review meeting here on Monday, he said the proposed scheme should be executed to enhance the living conditions of the people living close to these watersheds.

Departments of Forest, Revenue, Agriculture, Horticulture, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture Engineering, all to be involved in the execution, would ensure that the allocated amount was utilised judiciously.

Mr. Vijayakumar also asked the officials from Department of Forest to completely ban the use of plastic within the areas under their control so as to conserve the biodiversity of Western Ghats.

Collector C. Samayamoorthy appealed to the Secretary to increase financial allocation to the district to carryout development activities in the tourist spots here and introduce more services to attract tourists to these areas.

Joint Director of Agriculture K. Soundararajan, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, Dr. Ramanathan, Deputy Director, Kalakkad – Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve's Mundanthurai Range, Gurusamy, Deputy Director, Department of Horticulture, Rajan Ravichandran and others participated in the meeting.

Farmers demand release of 3,000 cusecs of water for 17 channels



A number of farmers of the district, who turned up with withering crops, squatted in front of the collectorate here on Monday morning demanding release of at least 3,000 cusecs of water from Mettur Dam to save the standing crops in the 17-channel area.

Led by representatives of various associations including Ayilai Sivasauriyan, S. Masilamani, C.Chinnadurai, S.Subramanian and Puliur A. Nagarajan, they wanted to meet Collector Jayashree Muralidharan to submit a memorandum.

However, the police were prepared to permit only a few of them to meet the collector which infuriated the farmers. The police pointed out that already the collectorate was crowded because of the people who have gathered in large numbers to submit petitions to the collector as Monday happens to the public grievances day.

But when the farmers tried to get into the collectorate, the police closed the main gate sparking a minor agitation.

They then squatted in front of the collectorate and raised slogans. They also wanted the Collector to meet them at the gate.

However, Senthamizhselvan, Personal Assistant (General) to the Collector, who received their memorandum at the gate, pacified them.

The farmers later told media persons that annual crops including banana, sugarcane and betel vines, apart from paddy, raised in about two lakh acres in the 17-channel area have started withering because of very poor water supply. The current release of about 1,000 cusecs would not reach the 17 channels and hence the release should be stepped up at least to 3,000 cusecs, they demanded.

Their demands include compensation of Rs.40,000 per acre for farmers who have lost samba crop, construction of barrages near the drinking water schemes along the Cauvery, and stoppage of power supply to lift irrigation societies between Mettur and Mayanur as they were drawing water flouting the conditions, and waiver off farm loans.

Farmers picket offices



Farmers' associations picketed offices of the district collectors of Thanjavur, Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam, demanding a compensation of Rs. 25,000 per acre to agriculturists.

Water level

Water level in the Periyar dam on Monday stood at 114.60 feet (136 feet) with an inflow of 4 cusecs and a discharge of 200 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 51.02 feet (71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 3,007 mcft.

Farmers to hold black flag protest from Jan. 14

With farmers anguish branching out into welter of protests across delta region, the Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Protection Association in a meeting in Thiruthuraipoondi has announced a black flag agitation during Pongal festival this year. The association has resolved to plant black flags for three days from January 14 to 16, condemning the "callousness of the Centre."

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Kaveri Danapalan, general secretary of the association, said that black flags would be hoisted in all water bodies, regulators of channels, fields, and outside houses. Alleging 'inaction' and 'dereliction' of responsibility by the Centre in securing compliance from Karnataka, the association has condemned the Central government for acting as a mere spectator in the inter-State dispute.

The forum has also condemned the Congress MP to Rajya Sabha Sudarshan Nachiappan for his alleged statement on the river water dispute to a private news channel. According to Mr. Danapalan, the MP's alleged statement that gazetting of CRWDT award was inconsequential in ensuring compliance from Karnataka was condemnable.

The association has also resolved to protest outside the MP's residence during Pongal.

Farmers demand higher compensation



Demanding higher compensation for the acquired land for the Salem – Ulundurpet four-lane National Highway 68 project, and as per Madras High Court direction, farmers submitted individual petitions to the Collector K. Maharabushanam here on Monday.

The petitioners said that 1,916 acres were acquired for the 136 km stretch project that also included, 10,000 houses, 1,500 wells for which the Central government had fixed a meagre compensation of Rs. 3,250 crore.

They said that many were not paid compensation amount till date and most of the farmers have lost their livelihood. Repeated representation to the district administration seeking enhanced compensation did not yield any results and hence public interest litigation was filed before the Madras High Court by a farmer R. Gopalakrishnan. The bench, comprising Chief Justice M.Y. Eqbal and Justice T.S. Sivagnanam, in their order on December 4, 2012 had asked the farmers to submit individual claim petitions to the Collector, seeking enhanced compensation.

The court also directed the officials concerned to decide the compensation amount in three months for the affected farmers in Salem and Villupuram districts.

During the weekly grievances day last week, around 140 farmers from Attur have submitted their claim petitions to the Collector. On Monday, affected farmers from Salem and Vazhapadi blocks submitted petitions to the Collector.

They demanded that compensation be paid as per existing market value, additional 18 per cent compensation for the delay in payment and 12 per cent interest rate as per the Land Acquisition Act 1894.

Led by All India Kissan Maha Sabha district Secretary V. Aiyyadurai, over 220 farmers submitted their petitions to the Collector during the weekly grievances day meeting.

Mettur Dam water level

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 35.20 feet on Monday morning, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 1,303 cusecs and the discharge, 1,500 cusecs.

Make optimum use of technology, farmers told



Farmers should make optimum use of technology to improve productivity, said the Nilgiris Collector Archana Patnaik at Kallakorai, near here, on Monday.

She was presiding over the launch of a two-day village level training programme organised by the Farmers Training Centre of the department of horticulture.

Stating that the potential to achieve higher productivity in areas under horticultural crops in the Nilgiris was good, she said that the climate and other conditions are conducive.

The Joint Director of Horticulture, G. Mohan, said that the village based training is a new concept and added that fifty farmers from Kallakorai and surrounding villages would benefit.

It includes interactive sessions with scientists of the United Planters Association of Southern India-Krishi Vigyan Kendra and the department of horticulture and field visits organised by the Horticulture Research Station.

Similar programmes would be conducted in Thunerai, Ketti, Nedugula, and Puthurvayal.

The beneficiaries would be trained to disseminate the knowledge gained among the farmers in their villages.

Village head K. Chellan and prominent resident of Kallakorai Nandhi Gowder spoke. Deputy Director of Horticulture N. Mani proposed a vote of thanks.

Distribution of benefits including sprayers to farmers marked the occasion.

Farmers stage protest

The Tamil Nadu Vivasagal Sangam staged a protest on Monday urging the Central and State governments to immediately allot funds and take up works for the project to link Thenpennai River (from Krishnagiri dam) to Palar river via Kallaru.

R. Mullai, State Executive Member of the association, said the Central government had announced the river linking project during 2007-2008, while the State government had enlisted this project among the schemes in its one-year achievements.

“The State government should allot the funds for the project in the ensuing budget session and start the works this year. Through this river linking project, surplus water from the Thenpennai river will be provided for lakes in Tirupattur and Vaniyambadi lakes,” he said

The association said water should be supplied by constructing linking channels to lakes in Tirupattur and Vaniyambadi taluks.

This included Setteri dam and all lakes in Mallapalli, Agraharam, Natrampalli, Sorakayalnatham, Dasariyappanur, Pappaneri and Kethandapatti areas. The protest was held at Natrampalli and around 400 farmers participated.

They want Centre, State to allot funds and to link Thenpennai River to Palar river via Kallaru

Water release from Veedur dam

District Collector V.Sampath opened the sluices of the Veedur dam, located in the Tindivanam block, to release water for irrigation on Monday.

Water discharge would be maintained for 135 days, that is, till May 21.

Need to raise agricultural productivity stressed



“India can emerge as a food basket for the world, if the agricultural sector is strengthened by adopting modern technologies to enhance productivity and check wastage,” said M.K. Shankarlinge Gowda, Principal Secretary, Horticulture.

He was speaking after inaugurating the 5th International Symposium on “Effects of fruits and vegetables on human health” at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) Dharwad here on Monday.

“India has an abundance of arable lands, and can feed the entire world if its agricultural productivity potential is tapped properly and scientifically,” he said.

He said that though the agricultural sector generated the most employment, its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product was minimal, which was a major drawback.

The principal secretary added that the country’s youth, who constituted 55 per cent of the total population, should be trained and engaged in this sector, whose future would be brighter if traditional knowledge and modern technical know-how were used together.

Mr. Gowda regretted the wastage of agricultural produce, which he said amounted to 30 per cent of the country’s total farm output.

Every year, foodgrains, fruits and vegetables worth Rs. 44,000 crore went waste.

“India produces 260 million tonnes of foodgrains and 213 million tonnes of fruits and vegetables. We need to emphasise the optimum use of cultivable land, and implement better marketing and transport systems and cold storage,” he said.

UAS Dean (Agriculture) M.B. Chetti said the symposium was organised to bring nutritionists, food scientists, bio-medical scientists, bio-chemists, dieticians, medical professionals, social economists, extension workers, NGOs and policy-makers on a common platform to create awareness on the consumption of fruits and vegetables and their effects on human health.

Delegates from various parts of India and from 15 other countries are participating in the symposium. Vice-Chancellor R.R. Hanchinal presided over the function. N. Prabhudev, chairman of the Karnataka Health Systems Commission, delivered the keynote address.

Team seeks Kharge's help for increase in MSP of red gram

A delegation of red gram growers and farmers' organisations have urged Union Labour and Employment Minister M. Mallikarjun Kharge to persuade the Union Agriculture Ministry to increase the minimum support price for red gram.

The delegation, led by Karnataka Pranta Raitha Sangha president Maruti Manpade, the former Minister S.K. Kanta, president of the Karnataka Red Gram Growers' Association Basavaraj Ingini, met Mr. Kharge at his residence here on Monday, and explained the injustice done in fixing the MSP for red gram by the Commission for Agriculture Cost and Prices all these years.

'Unfair'

They said that while the MSP for short-duration crops such as green and black gram were fixed at Rs. 4,300 a quintal, the MSP for long-duration red gram crop (the cost of cultivation for which was way higher) had been fixed at Rs. 3,850 a quintal.

Efforts

Mr. Kharge, who gave a patient hearing to the pleas of the delegation, said he had discussed the issue on several occasions with Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar. However, all his efforts so far had failed.

He assured the delegation that he would again take up the issue with Mr. Pawar.

Meanwhile, members of different farmers and trade organisations began their indefinite dharna outside the Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee here, opposing the MSP of Rs. 4,000 a quintal for red gram fixed by the State government. They said the MSP should be at least Rs. 5,000 a quintal.

Farmer ends life

Unable to clear his debts, a farmer allegedly committed suicide by hanging himself at Ugginakeri in Mundgod taluk on Sunday. Veerabhadrayya Charantayya Hiremath (52) ended life when his family members had gone for work. Sources said he had borrowed money for the

marriage of his daughter and was unable to repay it. The Mundgod police have registered a case. — Correspondent

Benefits of technology not reaching farmers, says judge

H.N. Nagamohan Das, Judge, Karnataka High Court, has said that the country would progress only if farmers were guaranteed a dignified living.

Mr. Nagamohan Das was inaugurating a legal literacy programme for farmers at Raghavendra Kalyan Mantap on Sunday.

Although farmers played key role in bringing about civilisations, they had always remained the oppressed class, he said. In spite of revolutionary changes in agriculture, farmers were always left in the lurch because of unattractive prices for their produce. The benefits of research carried out on agriculture had not reached farmers. The benefits of technology would continue to elude farmers until they were made aware of the new methods of cultivation, he said.

Referring to the attitude of the government towards farmers, Mr. Nagamohan Das called for a change in policy for farmers to be able to make use of technological advancement. He expressed his apprehension that the youth in the villages were desperate for immediate success.

Pokkali farmers to hold stir

Pokkali Paddy Fields Protection Agitation Council will organise a protest meet at Ezhupunna junction at 5 p.m. on January 8 to protest against a move by a section of government employees with the alleged support of prawn industries lobby to sabotage the construction of bunds that will prevent saline water flowing into the pokkali paddy fields.

The bunds when constructed will allow cultivation of pokkali rice in the paddy fields. The agitation will be led by among others, Prasanth Palakkappally, principal of Thevara SH College. A meeting to discuss the organising of protest meet on Monday was presided over by Council general convener, Francis Kalathunkal.

Swaminathan calls for doubling scientific efforts in agriculture



Calling upon the scientific community to double its efforts in harnessing science to meet challenges in food, nutrition and water, renowned agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan said here on Monday that science could lead to an “evergreen revolution in agriculture” aimed at increasing productivity without associated ecological or social harm.

Dr. Swaminathan, also the seniormost former president of the Indian Science Congress Association, was speaking to delegates at the valedictory session of the 100th Indian Science Congress held here from January 3 to 7.

“The future in my view belongs to the country with grains not guns,” he said, adding that India had come a long way from “ship-to-mouth” existence to “conferring the legal right of food to all with home grown food” under the proposed National Food Security Bill of India.

Referring to concerns over the rise in prices of fertilisers expressed by many, including Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, he said that the fertiliser-use efficiency is very low in the country at about 48 per cent. “It can be increased to 90 per cent using scientific methods,” Dr. Swaminathan said.

He later told journalists that agricultural produce from one kilogram of urea could be doubled by adopting scientific processes.

Calling for an increase in agricultural productivity in the State, Dr. Swaminathan said that West Bengal, Bihar and Assam were the sleeping giants of Indian agriculture with enormous potential to increase productivity.

Stating that empowerment of women in agriculture required special attention, he said that he had introduced a Private Members Bill in Rajya Sabha that would ensure certain basic entitlements for women.

Governor M.K. Narayanan, chairperson of the host committee of the Indian Science Congress, said that all the publications prepared during the five-day event should be circulated widely.

Farmers seek financial assistance



The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh has appealed to the Centre and the State government to sanction a sum of Rs 25,000 as annual relief to the farmers who are in dire straits owing to failure of monsoon, non-availability of water and electricity for irrigation, and spiralling costs of inputs.

The members, led by A.Thirugnanam, regional co-ordinator, made the demand while staging a demonstration here on Monday. They stated that the annual assistance was a must to bail out the farmers from economic crisis as many of them had been pushed below the poverty line.

This had forced the farmers to sell off their lands. For revival of agriculture, they demanded uninterrupted power supply to the farms for 12 hours a day. They also requested the government to sink one deep borewell each for every 10 acres of private land holdings and 15 acres of group holdings to improve the irrigation possibilities. They urged the government to enhance the sugarcane price to Rs. 4,000 a tonne. Taking into account the plight of the farmers, the government should waive the crop loans.

Dismiss Karnataka government: farmers



Tamilaga Eri Matrum Aatrupasana Vivasayigal Sangam has demanded dismissal of the Karnataka government for failing to honour the direction of the Supreme Court and the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal to release water to Tamil Nadu.

Besides, while condemning the inertia of the Central government in this regard, it has pleaded that the final award of the tribunal should be gazetted at the earliest. All the MPs from Tamil Nadu should quit Parliament in order to press these issues, it said. This was one of the major resolutions passed at a meeting here on Sunday.

According to State president P. Viswanathan, who presided, the meeting also demanded that the State be declared “drought-hit” and farmers who have lost their crops paid a compensation of Rs.40,000 per acre. The families of farmers who have committed suicide should be given a solatium of Rs.10 lakh each, apart from a job for a member of each family. All co-operative loans of farmers should be written off, it demanded.

Another resolution sought procurement price of Rs.4,000 for a tonne of sugarcane, Rs.1,750 a quintal of paddy, Rs.75 a kilogram of cotton, Rs.3,000 for a bag of maize and Rs.100 a kg of copra.

In order to save standing crops like paddy, banana and sugarcane it wanted 18-hour three-phase power supply ensured for farmers.

They pleaded that all concessions announced for delta farmers should be extended to those in Thirumanur Panchayat Union of Ariyalur district.

Apart from clearing silt in tanks and water bodies in the State, the meeting wanted the government to create 1,000 new tanks to conserve rain water.

Another resolution sought pension of Rs.3,000 per month to all farmers aged 60 and above.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Tuesday, Jan 8

Max Min

30.0° | 21.7°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 79

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:33

Sunset: 05:56

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

Wednesday, Jan 9

Max Min

32° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Thursday Jan 10	Friday Jan 11	Saturday Jan 12	Sunday Jan 13	Monday Jan 14
32° 23° Cloudy	25° 23° Cloudy	25° 23° Overcast	24° 23° Overcast	25° 23° Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 100

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:15

Sunset: 05:39

Barometer: 1019



8.2% economic growth not easy: Plan panel study

Achieving 8.2% growth during the 12th Plan period (2012-17) will not be easy and a fresh approach to economic issues is needed to push growth, a Planning Commission study has said. The National Development Council (NDC) has already scaled down the average growth target for the 12th Plan to 8% from 8.2% envisaged earlier. The average growth rate was 7.9% in 11th Plan (2007-12).

"...achieving 8.2% growth over the next five years will not be easy. Policy options where we only augment one determinant of growth at a time will not be enough, because the quantum of increase needed will be very high and at times unreasonable," according to the study by Pranjul Bhandari, an economist in the Planning Commission.

NDC, the country's apex policy making body, approved the 8% average growth in 12th Plan on December 27, while approving the 5-year plan document.

"Only a balanced growth path will be plausible and sustainable. New thinking, new efforts and new policies which can be implemented in a time-bound manner will be needed to augment each determinant of growth, in order to achieve the 12th Plan target over the next five years," the study has suggested.

It said the policies that led the growth spurt of mid-2000s may have already had its impact.

The country recorded 9-year low annual economic growth of 6.5% in 2011-12. The economy has grown by 5.4% in the first half of this fiscal (April-September).

Meanwhile, noted economist working with the World Bank, Kaushik Basu has also said that the economic growth in the current fiscal would be less than 6%.

THE HINDU Business Line

TODAY FARM NEWS

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Circular trading pulls pepper futures down

The pepper market witnessed high volatility and circular trading on Monday, resulting in alleged price rigging. Consequently, all active contracts closed much below the previous day's closing.

The bear operators got into the driving seat and pushed the prices down despite tight availability and against the market fundamentals, market sources told *Business Line*.

High volatility

The market opened on a firmer note and the February contract touched the highest price of Rs 35,460 a quintal in the opening session. Thereafter, it traded with high volatility.

In the closing hours, it fell sharply and touched the lowest price of the day at Rs 34,445, down by Rs 1,015 a quintal. Then it picked up marginally to the last traded price of Rs 34,570 a quintal.

In fact, 85 per cent of the turnover was in February. Such high volatility and "price rigging and circular trading" has made the market an on line gambling den and rather a casino" some of the dealers and growers alleged.

They said the market has been rigged when there was no material available. On-the-spot arrival remained very thin while the material available on the exchange platform is locked up in warehouses.

Domestic demand was strong with all the pipelines of consuming markets empty and the end users remaining uncovered. The Pongal demand, they claimed, is so heavy that dealers from Madurai were covering from Kollam and Pathanamthitta districts.

Pepper from Erattupetta region is also allegedly sold after mixing with Idukki pepper to Tamil Nadu based dealers as high range pepper at Rs 380-385 a kg, they alleged.

February contract on the NCDEX decreased by Rs 800 a quintal to close at Rs 34,570 a quintal. March and April fell by Rs 525 and 425 respectively to close at Rs 33,780 and 33,600 a quintal.

Turnover

Total turnover increased by 1,961 tonnes to close at 2,617 tonnes, indicating good circular trading to pull the market down as the difference in the total open interest was a meagre 14 tonnes.

Total open interest dropped by 14 tonnes to close at 3,616 tonnes. February open interest decreased by 51 tonnes to close at 2,636 tonnes while that of March declined by two tonnes to 704 tonnes. April open interest increased by 39 tonnes to close at 254 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the futures trend fell by Rs 200 a quintal to close at Rs 37,200 (ungarbled) and Rs 38,700 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$7,250 a tonne (c&f) for Jan at spot prices while for Feb it was at \$6,500 a tonne (c&f). Depreciation of the rupee against the dollar also aided the fall in the parity, they said.

Jeera futures gain on higher demand

Jeera futures on NCDEX opened higher at Rs 14,407 a quintal on Monday against the previous close of Rs 14,370. The March contract had made a high of Rs 14,657 and low of Rs 14,375. It was up by two per cent at Rs 14,655 at 1.42 pm.

Buying interest has suddenly picked up in jeera after the sharp fall in prices during last few trading sessions. However, the high inventory with traders will restrict any sharp jump in prices. Besides, the prevailing cold weather is expected to better yield despite a fall in acreage.

Rinac bags cold storage order from Hatsun Agro

Rinac India Ltd has bagged an Rs 2.9-crore order from Hatsun Agro Products Ltd to set up a cold storage facility at its plant in Dharmapuri district.

A press release from Rinac said this order is for design, engineering, supply, erection, testing and commissioning of curd incubation and cold storage facility at the dairy company's plant.

Rinac will set up three cold rooms, three curd incubation rooms, three blast chillers with processing area and ante rooms.

Rinac, an integrated engineering company for cold chain, said its presence in the dairy segment for temperature controlled storage and processing will enable it to meet the 12-week time-frame for project execution.

Rinac India is an Rs 120-crore company that caters to the hospitality, food retail, healthcare, dairy, processed food and horticulture sectors.

Nabard sanctions Rs 29.87 cr to TN

National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has sanctioned Rs. 29.87 crore loan to Tamil Nadu under its Rural Infrastructure Development Fund - XVIII for infrastructure projects.

A press release from Nabard quoting Lalitha Venkatesan, Chief General Manager, Chennai Regional Office of Nabard, said Rs 28.37 crore has been sanctioned for construction of 44 of Adi Dravidar and tribal community hostels in 17 districts. These will benefit 2,200 students from 466 villages.

The balance Rs 1.50 crore is for the construction of two godowns in Pudukottai and Karur district to store 3,000 tonnes of agriculture produce.

The cumulative sanction by the bank under RIDF-XVIII for 2012-13 is Rs 1,286.30 crore with Rs 152.70 crore for storage and warehousing facility. Other infrastructure development include rural roads and bridges; irrigation, school infrastructure; strengthening of dug out ponds for drinking water; sanitary complexes and pay and use toilets in rural and semi urban areas; fish farms and jetties for inland and marine fisheries; hostels for backward classes, most backward classes and minorities community students, she said in the release.

Nepal's Ostrich farmer looks for Indian investment



Many will shudder at the thought of having a roast Ostrich at their dinner table given the massive size of these ratite birds. However, ostrich meat is gaining popularity globally, including India, among the health conscious 'red meat' lovers. This is due to the medicinal qualities the bird possesses. The meat is called 'future meat' by several people.

This has given rise to large-scale emu and ostrich farming, popularly known as 'golden farming' in India and Nepal too. While in India, States such as Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra and Odisha are proactive in rearing these massive flightless birds of Australian origin, in Nepal it is slowly gaining traction.

Ostrich Nepal, a private company in Nepal's Bhairawaha district, which started commercial farming of these avians four years ago, now boasts of having the largest breeding centre spread across 13.54 hectares. The company wants private investments from Indian firms to take up the farming in a large scale. The company already has a tie-up with Emu India for supply of emu chicks and technical know-how.

"I know of several companies that are into emu farming in India. Together, India and Nepal can be a global supplier of Ostrich meat, which is very much in demand in China, Europe and the US," said C.P. Sharma, founder of Ostrich Nepal. Initial investment in the company was around Rs 30 crore.

At present, Sharma's farm has 1,000 birds, mostly chicks, in the farm. According to him, the company will be able to supply up to 200 tonnes and 2,500 tonnes in 2013 and 2014 respectively. A chick takes 3-4 years to grow.

“We started ostrich farming keeping in mind the international market. The ostrich products — meat, leather and feather — are very expensive (€40 a pound) in the market given their medicinal values. Ostrich meat contains less cholesterol and high level of vitamins and minerals. One kg of ostrich meat costs up to \$90 in the international market,” he added.

Dip in mercury robs cardamom of its flavour



he cardamom market remained easier to nearly steady last week on lack of aggressive buying by upcountry dealers and a similar trend on the part of exporters at the auctions.

The severe cold wave conditions and sharp fall in temperatures in the North have virtually stopped retail trading and that in turn had impacted the buying trend of upcountry dealers, market sources told *Business Line*. “They were buying but not aggressively”, they said.

Crop scenario

While admitting the fact that the current crop is less by about 50 per cent, the trade is maintaining a sentiment that the growers are holding back their produce on anticipation that the prices would move up once the harvesting came to an end, they said. “Therefore, the buyers believe they can cover later as there would be a spread in supply”.

This phenomenon is attributed by some in the trade for a steady market now.

Exporters are said to have bought around 20 tonnes of cardamom last week. However, buyers from North Indian centres were slow due to drop in sales.

They said retailers were not opening the shops because of the weather conditions.

Currently, last round of picking is under way and that would come to a close by the end of this month.

It gives the indication that the total output of the current crop is estimated to be below 50 per cent of the last season's crop.

Total arrivals last week stood at 348 tonnes from around 270 tonnes the previous week which would have remained almost at identical levels had there was no holiday on Dec 25.

Dry spell

Dry weather conditions prevailed in the growing areas which have not received any showers for several weeks now.

However, the cold climate has disappeared, of late, and the current rise in temperature and humidity is viewed by growers as an indication of ensuing summer rains, growers in Idukki said.

“At present, the plants are healthy but they require one or two showers now and if the growing areas received it in the coming days then that would have a positive impact on the next crop”, they said.

On the other hand, if the dry spell continued without any rains then it would be disastrous, they predicted.

Auction prices

The individual auction average price vacillated mostly between Rs 770 and Rs 820 a kg last week and it is expected to remain so given the current demand supply scenario, the trade predicted.

At the Sunday auction conducted by the KCPMC, total arrivals declined to 62.2 tonnes from 72 tonnes in the previous Sunday and the entire quantity was sold out.

The maximum price was at Rs 1,110 and minimum was at Rs 545.

Auction average price slipped to Rs 796 from Rs 812 the previous Sunday, P.C. Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *Business Line*.

The weighted average price as on Jan 6, 2013 stood at around Rs 771.64 against Rs 564.65 on the same date last year.

Prices of graded varieties (Rs/kg): AGEB 970-990; AGB 770-790; AGS 735-755 and AGS-1: 710-730.

With tea council in place, trade hopes for higher shipments



Exporters of quality teas from South India are expecting higher shipment in the next two years as the newly-formed Tea Council of South India (TCSI) will rid the trade of sub-standard teas.

Tea Board Chairman, who is also the Licensing Authority, has constituted the TCSI with Board's Executive Director at Coonoor as the Chairman and N. Dharmaraj, U. Saraf, D. Hegde and Mathew C. George as members. Its tenure is two years.

Gamut of services

The TCSI has jurisdiction over tea meant for export through the ports of Kochi, Tuticorin, ICD Coimbatore, Mumbai and Goa besides airports in the South from where tea is exported.

It also has jurisdiction on tea warehouses located in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, AP, Goa and Maharashtra.

The TCSI will monitor tea exported from South, tea and tea waste imported and then exported and the storage facilities for export teas.

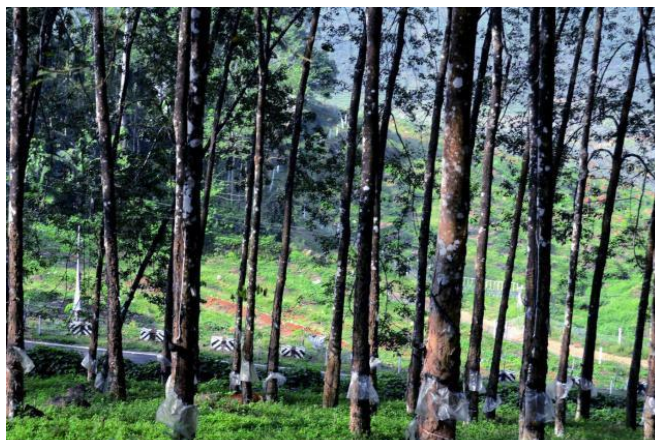
It may cause random inspections. It may also rate exporters and export houses.

It is required to submit to the Tea Board Chairman its report every month.

Trade welcomes

“This is a welcome initiative because recently, there had been instances of lowering the image of South India’s tea quality when some exporters shipped complied with the request of some importers for shipping low-quality teas at cheap prices. To assure the exporters of the fact that India’s teas are second to none, the TCSI is required because it will introduce institutionalised mandatory checking of quality of teas prior to shipment. The council will immensely help to boost exports of South Indian quality teas,” TCSI member Hegde told *Business Line*.

Spot rubber turns weak



Spot rubber closed weak on Monday. Selected counters lost charm following the marginal declines on the National Multi Commodity Exchange. The trend was mixed but the overall sentiments remained neutral in a comparatively dull trading session. Meanwhile, the key TOCOM rubber futures hit a fresh eight-month high on early trades as encouraging US economic data and a weak yen made investors optimistic.

Sheet rubber slipped to Rs 163.50 (164) a kg, according to traders. The grade continued to rule unchanged at Rs 163 a kg at Kottayam and Kochi, as quoted by the Rubber Board.

The January series weakened to Rs 165.25 (166.31), February to Rs 167.69 (168.96) March to Rs 170.52 (171.86), April to Rs 174.57 (175.50) and May to Rs 176 (177.70) a kg, while June series remained inactive on the NMCE.

RSS 3 (spot) improved to Rs 184.42 (183.40) a kg at Bangkok. The January futures dropped to ₹291.2 (Rs 183.23) from ₹294.5 a kg during the day session and then to ₹290.7 (Rs 182.92) in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rates were (Rs/kg): RSS-4: 163.50 (164); RSS-5: 158 (158); ungraded: 153 (154); ISNR 20: 154 (154) and latex 60 per cent: 108 (108).

Copra arrivals dry up despite rise in prices



Copra prices increased at the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee yards in Erode as buyers from Kerala, especially crushers, bought huge stocks.

But despite the higher prices at the Avalpoondurai Regulated market Committee arrivals were low at 670 quintals, notwithstanding a Rs 200 a quintal rise in prices.

Buyers from Tuticorin and local places purchased stocks.

The first quality copra was sold at Rs 4,835-5,020 a quintal, the second quality at Rs 3,850-4,755. On Friday last, the first quality copra was sold at Rs 4,660-4,850, second quality at Rs 3,745-4,615; 2,073 quintals arrived and sold.

Oil crushers said that they are already having adequate stock of copra and are buying more copra as the price of coconut oil has started increasing.

R.M. Palanisamy a coconut oil dealer, said that coconut oil was selling at Rs 1,050 for 15 kg loose pack, higher than last week's price. Prices of the oil will go up in the next week, he said. In the open market, copra is selling at Rs 5,200 and oil crushers are buying it.

Vibha Seeds to raise Rs 500 cr from private equity player



Vibha Seeds, one among the top-5 seed companies in the country, will infuse private equity funds of Rs 500 crore in the next few months.

The Rs 1,000-crore integrated crop genetic research, processing and producing company is in the process of consolidating and restructuring its activities before it infuses funds.

Forming strategic alliances and special purpose vehicles for non-seed firms that want to diversity into this field too are some of the options the company is mulling to raise funds.

“We are in the process of identifying profitable and not-so-profitable business areas. We are into 30 crops, including 12 field crops and 18 vegetable crops. We will analyse our portfolio and put on hold our activity in the crops that consume more working capital and very long yielding cycles. Classification along different verticals too is part of the restructuring activity,” P. Vidyasagar, Chairman and Managing Director, told *Business Line*.

The Singapore-based Vibha Seeds International Holdings owns the group’s international ventures in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Bangladesh.

In India, the group runs subsidiaries such as Vibha AgroTech, Nusun Genetic Research, SINNOVA (vegetables seed company), CenBios (agricultural biotechnology firm) and Divine that specialises in business activities related to horticulture and floriculture. “We will complete this process in two months and appoint merchant bankers to advise us on the fund raising and picking the right partners,” he said.

global operations

The firm, which has expanded to Africa, said it completed testing of some material in Ethiopia.

“We will register 30 products in cotton, rice and vegetables. We have begun trials in Mozambique and Senegal. We will go to Kenya and Tanzania with our cotton products,” he said.

Investments

The Rs 10,000-crore seed industry is largely funded by informal sources and seed dealers, with financial institutions and banks keeping away because of lack of understanding of the business.

They are also hesitant keeping in view the very long investment-to-gestation periods. Investments made in this seed growing season would only get returns 12-18 months later. In case of season failures, they would have to wait for one more year.

Global investment funds such as Blackstone and Carlyle have begun to invest in Indian agriculture and allied sectors. While Blackstone invested about Rs 250 crore in seed major Nuziveedu Seeds, Carlyle funded dairy enterprises recently.

Tea prices steady at Kochi auction



A good demand perked up prices of almost all varieties of tea at the Kochi tea auction. The quantity on offer in the dust category in Cochin Sale No.01 was 12,81,000 kg.

The market for high-priced good liquoring teas remained steady to firm; others were irregular and lower by Re 1 to Rs 2 and sometimes more. The quantity on offer in the orthodox grades was 23,000 kg and primary grades remained steady. Others were easier by Rs 2 to Rs 3. Bulk

of the offerings was absorbed by exporters, according to auctioneers Forbes, Ewart and Figgis Pvt Ltd.

In the best CTC dusts, PD varieties quoted Rs 101/111, RD grades stood at Rs 106/113, SRD fetched prices at Rs 108/117 and SFD ruled at Rs 107/117.

The leaf sales also witnessed a good demand and the quantity on offer in the orthodox grades was 199,500 kg. Select Nilgiri Brokens and whole leaf steady to firm.

The quantity on offer in the CTC leaf was 95,000 kg. The market for bolder brokens was irregular and tended to ease. Smaller brokens and fannings were steady to dearer, especially blacker varieties.

In the dust category Injipara (Prm) SRD fetched the best prices of Rs 147 . In the leaf grades, Pascoes Hyson Green tea quoted the best prices of Rs 376 .

Kochi tea prices firm up on good demand

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Corresponding Fannings appreciated by value. Medium all varieties of tippy grades and bolder broken registered strong feature and prices moved up following quality. Medium and secondary broken and Fannings were steady to dearer.

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In the dust category, Injipara (Prm) SRD fetched the best prices of Rs 147 followed by Injipara (Prm) RD at Rs 138. In the leaf grades, Pascoes Hyson Green tea quoted the best prices of Rs 376 followed by Chamraj FOP-Sup Green Tea and Chamraj FOP at Rs 350 each.

Karnataka's sugarcane production likely to fall 10% during the current crop year

The drop in production is mainly attributed to drought in major growing regions across the state

Karnataka's sugarcane production during the current crop year (October-September) is likely to decline by 10 per cent to 30 million tonnes. For the crop year ended September 2012, the state's production of sugarcane touched 33.4 million tonnes. Harvesting and crushing for the current year has begun in most of the growing regions.

The drop in production is mainly attributed to drought in major growing regions across the state. The major growing regions have witnessed a 28 per cent deficit rainfall during the southwest monsoon and 23 per cent deficit during the northeast monsoon seasons this year, according to data by the state department of agriculture.

The state received 615 mm rainfall between June 1, 2012 and September 30, 2012 as against the normal rainfall of 835 mm during the period. During the period from October 1 to December 27, 2012, Karnataka received 146 mm rainfall as against the normal rainfall of 189 mm.

Wheat declines 0.85% on reduced offtake

Reduced offtake by flour mills influenced wheat trade

Wheat futures for February declined by Rs 13, or 0.85% to Rs 1516 per quintal in 9,660 lots at the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange today.

The January contract shed Rs 6, or 0.39% to Rs 1,525 per quintal in 4,060 lots.

Analysts said adequate supplies, reduced offtake by flour mills influenced wheat futures trade.

Cardamom declines 0.47% on profit-booking



At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom futures for February declined by Rs 4.90, or 0.47%, to Rs 1,021.30 per kg, in 205 lots.

The January contract shed Rs 1.90, or 0.19%, to Rs 985 per kg, in 496 lots.

Besides profit-booking, a weak trend at the spot markets due to increased supply also affected the cardamom futures.

Jeera rises 1.70% on export demand

Jeera futures for March rose by Rs 245, or 1.70% to Rs 14,615 per quintal in 13,299 lots at the Multi Commodity Exchange today.



The April contract gained Rs 242.50, or 1.68% to Rs 14,645 per quintal in 4,020 lots.

Pick-up in overseas demand, limited stocks with other producing countries influenced jeera futures trade.

However, higher area under cultivation capped the gains.

Potato up 1.63% on rising spot demand



At the Multi Commodity Exchange, potato futures for March rose by Rs 12.10, or 1.63%, to Rs 752.70 per quintal, in 92 lots.

The April contract also moved up by Rs 8.50, or 1.22% to Rs 704 per quintal in 4 lots.

Increased spot market demand, tight supplies pushed up potato futures.

Farmer develops new custard apple variety sans training, support

NAGPUR: Passion and dedication of a farmer towards [agriculture](#) has apparently resulted into a new and improved variety of a much neglected fruit, custard-apple. After years of painstaking efforts, Suresh Patil, a believer in natural farming, has developed the variety and named it 'Saraswati Saat' in honour of his mother.

Patil's work deserves special appreciation because he developed the variety through trial and error method despite not having any formal training in agriculture. Even his efforts to approach the Akola based [Panjabrao Deshmukh Krishi Vidyapeeth](#) (PDKV) for support and guidance had failed. Patil said he has no regrets as long as his customers buy the fruit and he gets relatively higher price than the market. He is also determined to further improve this variety as well as some other fruits like pomegranate.

Patil's Saraswati Garden Nursery and Farms near Jam on Wardha road has three varieties of custard apple - local or conventional Balanagar variety, Hanumanphal brought from the PDKV and his own Saraswati Saat. The fruit of [Saraswati Saat](#) is very big (500 gm to 1100 gm) with almost 80% pulp, fewer seeds, thin skin, less prominent eyes and lesser sweetness. It is ideal for use in processing of ice-cream as well as for making juice.

"I first planted seeds of the local variety and obtained 50 trees in 1996. After closely observing these trees and fruits for 3-4 years, I realized that the seventh tree in the orchard had fruits which were much different and better than others. In 2005, I used this tree for grafting on the local variety and developed 500 trees in two acres. Since then I have been getting a good yield from my orchard," said Patil.

To allow cross pollination for better results he has also planted 10-15% trees of desi variety and Balanagar variety. Patil claims he is getting about 30-35 fruits per tree with 15-20 kg yield per tree. The overall productivity of this new variety is 7.5 tonnes per acre which earns him Rs3.5-4 lakh in just two months. In fact, his net profit is Rs3.5 lakh because apart from the expenses on picking and packing, the new fruit variety hardly requires any cultivation cost. Patil follows the concept of natural farming which means no chemicals in the form of either fertilizer or pesticide are used.

Patil is a government employee but he visits his farm everyday before and after work. His nephew Pankaj Patil is the main caretaker of the orchard. "I developed interest in farming because of my father and brother. When posted in Pune, I would drive to farmers' fields at 5am to check on the new developments in farming. Now agriculture is my first love," said Patil.

He also uses a novel method of watering trees and to supply nutrients. He has dug a pit between every two trees in which all the leaves and waste generated from field is collected. Instead of watering the roots of the tree, he waters the pit to allow better absorption by roots spread outwards. He also uses 'Jeevamrat' made from jaggery and cow urine as nutrients for the plants. Plantation of drumstick trees in between the fruit bearing trees ensures better nitrogen absorption

Biting cold brings spectre of Global Warming closer, farmers worried but wheat crop safe

NEW DELHI: Icy Siberian winds have chilled northern India and will intensify in the days ahead, making the winter even more severe, and highlighting the uncanny rise in extreme weather patterns such as droughts, hot spells and torrential downpours like the one that swamped Mumbai in 2005.

For companies selling beverages, winter-wear and heaters, business is booming with sales rising up to 40% in one of the coldest Indian winters in decades, but farmers are getting anxious

about the impact on vegetables, pulses and oilseeds although the wheat crop is secure. The weather office says there is no quick relief in the offing.

"There's no respite from the bone-chilling cold. A high-pressure system created over Siberia is pushing cold waves to India. The system doesn't phase out and persists at least for a couple of weeks once it is created," said Laxman Singh Rathore, director-general, [India Meteorological Department](#).

Farmers storm into Trichy collector's office demanding water

TRICHY: About 200 farmers, who cultivate paddy and banana that draws sustenance the 17 traditional channels in the Trichy and Karur regions on Monday stormed into the district collector's office demanding water to be released at the rate of 3,000 cusecs from Mettur dam for at least another month, so that their crop would be prevented from imminent death. However, all the farmers led by Puliur Nagarajan, the state deputy secretary of TNCC's agricultural wing, Ayilai Sivasuriyan, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam ([CPI](#)), C Masilamani, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam ([CPM](#)) and Chinnadurai, district secretary, Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, Trichy were stopped at the main entrance to the Trichy collector's office forcing them to squat on the road in protests.

According to the farmers, large tracts of land under banana cultivation would come to fruition in a short time, provided they were well fed in the crucial days. "It is a highly risky situation. I have had three acres under banana and already spent Rs 6 lakh over it," Nagarajan said. The farmers were not let in for a couple of hours on the first public grievances day of the year and at one point of time, the farmers insisted on their democratic right to meet the collector.

Sivasuriyan said that the state had in the bygone years released water when the Mettur dam contained as much as 20 feet of water and now that the dam had 36 feet as on January 7, the government could well release water to save the standing crop.

A top official from the public works department speaking to TOI on condition of anonymity said, "A few more feet down, the fishes would float and another few more, we would hit clay. We have to effectively use water to supply drinking water for another six months. Though we do empathise with the feelings of the farmers, we are completely helpless. But the question is the farmers know better than anyone else about the water shortage," he clarified.

There are 17 channels built across Cauvery between Mettur and Kallanai and they irrigate an area of 1,68,724 acres. There are three more channels - Pullampadi, Peruvali and Ayyan - that caters to a total of 59,632 acre, which would get water only if the Mettur level is not less than 90 feet.

Farmers in district bat for shade net houses

AURANGABAD: Looking at the water scarcity in the region, 105 farmers have applied for permission for shade net houses in Aurangabad district in the current financial year. From 205 onwards only 128 farmers had availed the modern farming technique offered by the [agriculture department](#) at a subsidy of 50%. The concept of shade net house is gaining popularity among the regional farmers as it saves about 60% of water required in traditional farming.

Shade net house is a kind of farming done in a covered shade where water temperature and proportion of oxygen and carbon dioxide are controlled for desired growth of the crops. "It saves huge quantity of water as it is based on modern technique of irrigation. Sprinklers and foggers are used for the purpose of irrigation in shade net house. This method is possible even if less quantity of water is available," said technical officer in [District Superintendent Agriculture Office](#) - Aurangabad Anil Hadgoankar on Tuesday.

The concept was also picking up in the region as the crop cultivated in the shade net houses were sold at higher price as compared to the crops grown in traditional farming, he explained. The Hadgoankar also said that the farmers were cultivating high value crops like hybrid variety of flowers, like roses, gerbera, etc. "Crops grown in such control conditions have longer shelf life

compared to other crops. Farmers can rely on it and make assured income by investing small sum. Moreover, the government is also giving 50 per cent subsidy on the project," he said.

The agriculture officer further said that the scheme was not new and it was available from 2005 but when the region received normal rainfall, the farmers were not very keen about the concept.

However, when the farmers started feeling the pinch of scanty rainfall in the region, large number of them started opting for new techniques of farming, he said.

The government is promoting the modern way of farming and offering subsidy to the farmers for building shade net houses. Hadgoankar said that farmers could build these facilities in sizes from 600 square metres to 4,000 square metres area. Highlighting on the cost of the project, he said that on an average expenditure of Rs 325 to Rs 390 per square is required to build the house.