

## **Flowers turn expensive at Dindigul market**

Prices of almost all flowers in the wholesale market here have shot up sharply due to increased demand in view of Vinayagar Chaturthi to be celebrated on Friday and Onam on September 6. Dindigul, one of the biggest markets in south Tamil Nadu, dispatches several quintals of flowers to Coimbatore, Erode, Thanjavur, Cuddalore, Tiruvarur, Vellore and Chennai, besides Mumbai, Kerala and Malaysia. Poor arrivals owing to acute drought and monsoon failure, and burgeoning demand have catapulted flower prices. The arrivals have come down by half this season. The market received five tonnes of flowers on Wednesday, against the normal daily arrival of 10 tonnes.

## **Clear encroachments from channels: farmers**

Ahead of water release from the Periyar credit for irrigation, farmers have urged the Collector to ensure that water channels are cleared of encroachments to ensure free flow. Participants at the monthly farmers' grievance day meeting held at the Collectorate here on Wednesday said the channels were either encroached upon or had 'seemai karuvelam' (*Prosopis juliflora*) growth. "While we wait for the release of water for irrigation, work should be completed on clearing the channels to ensure that water reaches our fields," they said.

## **Shortage of surveyors**

M. Pandian said there had been no survey or official visit to ascertain the work to be carried out in this regard and appealed to Collector L. Subramanian to send a team for inspection. Mr. Subramanian admitted that there was a 50 per cent shortage of surveyors in the district. "We are trying to carry out inspections and a survey with available manpower. Most of those who join as surveyors stay only

for a while and there are many vacancies in the department. We have communicated the need for more surveyors to the government,” he said. Mr. Subramanian assured the farmers that he would look into their petitions regarding desilting of channels and removal of encroachments on a priority basis and assign surveyors for inspection at the earliest. Officials from the Public Works Department (PWD) said work had already begun with vegetation clearing in and along the Periyar Main Canal near Alanganallur on Tuesday. Stating that the State government had set aside Rs.40 crore for the purpose, the officials said works would soon begin to clear branch channels 1 to 6 and 11, 12 and 13 of encroachments and blockages. Mr. Subramanian also instructed the PWD officials to carry out temporary works to clear all the channels before the release of water and the monsoon.

### **Water release sought**

Farmers in Madurai district demanded release of water from Periyar credit at the earliest for the double-crop areas at the monthly grievance day meeting here on Wednesday. While officials from the Public Works Department (PWD) said they had sent a proposal to the State government and were awaiting approval, the farmers expressed their concerns at releasing water after the storage in the Periyar credit reached 6,000 mcft. “If water is released after that, it will be used by the single-crop areas as well and we will have inadequate water to carry out our farming activities. Many of us are raising nurseries and are anticipating early release of water,” they said. Addressing their concerns, officials from the PWD and Collector L. Subramanian said the proposal submitted was meant only for farmers of the double-crop area. “Water will be released after ensuring that the storage level is comfortable,” they said.

### **Drought relief demanded**

The issue of compensation for drought-hit areas cropped up yet again at the

monthly farmers' grievance day meeting at the Collectorate here on Wednesday.K. Kathiresan from Melur said Madurai should be declared a drought-affected district, adequate compensation given to those farmers who had lost mango and coconut trees and their agriculture loans waived. "We are planning a protest in this regard at Melur on September 9," he said.Many farmers said they were not aware of areas that had been surveyed to ascertain the quantum of crop loss.An Agriculture Department official said the survey had been completed and farmers could check if their fields had been included in the list. "If you find that your fields had not been included, inform us so that we can inspect them and calculate the loss," he said.

### **Groundwater level**

The farmers appealed to Collector L. Subramanian to introduce a system whereby they could know the groundwater level in their blocks. Stating that they had to spend a huge sum of money to sink borewells that yielded no water, the farmers said they must have access to details of groundwater level in their block to avoid wastage of money.Mr. Subramanian asked the officials to take the groundwater details to the farmers during monthly block visits and explain the technicalities involved."It is important to let people at the grass-roots level have access to them," he said.

### **Farmers of various associations urge government to withdraw new crop insurance scheme**

Farmers of various associations expressed their displeasure over the new crop insurance scheme and urged the government to withdraw it at the grievances meet held here on Wednesday .Under the new scheme, a farmer has to pay a premium of Rs.1, 300 per acre. The insurance companies, however, would pay only Rs.4, 442 as compensation even for fully damaged crops. Hence the new insurance

policy should be withdrawn without any pre-condition, they said. Farmers also alleged that Agriculture Department was biased against releasing subsidy for certified seeds, and wanted the Collector to resolve the issue and initiate action against erring officials. Collector T. Munusamy, who presided over the meet, assured them of action. The district secretary of All India Kisan Sabha, V. Subramanian said that though the water was released from Mettur dam on August 10, it was yet to reach the tail-end areas. Hence farmers in such areas were unable to start agriculture operations. Mr. Subramanian also urged the district administration to make arrangements for proper maintenance of irrigation infrastructure. M. S. Mujubudeen, a farmer, demanded construction of a check dam at the Harichandra River at the earliest as announced by the Chief Minister at a cost of Rs. 600 crore and also demanded supply of ADT 38 variety seeds to the farmers of Keezayur union living in the coastal belt. The Collector said the district had received 93.10 mm of rainfall during August against the normal average of 58.50 mm for the month. The normal cultivable land in the district was 1, 70,260 hectares. The agriculture department has fixed a target of 36,000 hectares for kuruvai, 1, 18,900 hectares for samba, 20,000 hectares for thaladi, and 7,900 hectares for summer season. All primary agriculture co-operative societies and agriculture extension centres have adequate certified seeds and farmers must make use of them, the Collector said.

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### **Sugarcane institute asks farmers to grow new varieties**

The Sugarcane Breeding Institute (SBI), Coimbatore, has urged farmers in the State to cultivate three new tropical sugarcane varieties introduced by it recently to increase production.Inaugurating the 45<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Sugarcane Research and Development Workers of Tamil Nadu & Puducherry, organised by the SBI and Kothari Sugars and Chemicals Limited here, N.Vijayan Nair, Director, SRI, Coimbatore, said that the varieties such as Co0403, Co06027, and Co06030 would be highly suitable for Tamil Nadu. They had been tested in different locations of the country including Tamil Nadu. The trial cultivation of

them had given high yield than some of the earlier varieties. Though the institute had distributed seeds of newly notified varieties to a group of farmers, there was a need to grow nurseries in large numbers to improve their popularity among farmers. Hence, sugarcane factories should take steps to raise nurseries with the help of farmers in their cover areas. The sugar industry should take a lead role in popularising the varieties, he said. Emphasising the need for adapting modern technologies, Mr. Nair said farmers should come out of their age-old traditional practices. If they followed new methods, prescribed by the research agencies and institutes, they could improve productivity with less water and efficient pest management. M. Silvester, president, (Operations), Kothari Sugars and Chemicals Limited, said that Rangarajan Committee's recommendation of sharing 70 per cent of the total revenue from sugar, molasses, and other related products as cane payment was a forward step that could save the sinking sugar industry. Since the major sugar producing neighbouring States had already adopted this policy, it was high time the Tamil Nadu government too announce a similar policy. With this arrangement, farmers would be assured of Fair and Remunerative Prices (FRP) fixed by the Central government. It would also guarantee a minimum return to them, he said.

### **Health camp for milch cows, goats on August 30 and 31**

The Department of Animal Husbandry will be conducting a Reproductive Health Camp for Milch Cows and Mass De-worming Programme for Goats/Sheep throughout Tamil Nadu on August 30 and 31. According to a release from the District Collector and the Regional Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, Vellore, the camp and the deworming programme are being organised at the instance of the Chief Minister in order to ensure sustained milk production from milch cows and to increase the weight gain in goats/sheep provided under the Free Distribution of Milch Cows and Goats/Sheep Schemes. Besides the beneficiaries of the above schemes, other farmers have also been requested to avail of this opportunity and

get their animals checked and dewormed. The camp would be held in the veterinary centres as well as in the villages. Under the Free Milch Cows Scheme, 650 cows each were distributed to that many beneficiaries in Vellore district during 2011-12, 2012-13 and 2013-14. In 2014-15, 180 cows were given to that many beneficiaries up to July.

### **Farmers suffer as paddy gets submerged**

Farmers pumping out water from their land in Shanavasapur in Bellary on Wednesday. Farmers in Shanavasapur village in Sirguppa taluk were stunned when paddy on close to 30 acres of land got submerged in the storm water. This happened because the authorities had blocked the vent of the storm water drain. "Due to continuous heavy rain for the past fortnight, our land, which are in low lying area adjacent to the low level canal of the Tungabhadra reservoir, have been inundated. The storm water on this 30 acre patch is around ten to fifteen feet above our recently transplanted paddy crop and we are a worried lot," Dodda Yeeregowda, a farmer, said. "The authorities of the Irrigation department blocking the vent of the storm water drain leading to a 'nallah' has been the main reason for our lands getting inundated," he blamed. Enquiries revealed that, to protect the bund of the LLC canal, the authorities had provided a drain to let the storm water enter the nallah. But, following complaints that miscreants were misusing the drain to drill a hole at the bottom of the canal to draw water illegally to irrigate their lands, the authorities thought it fit to block the vent near the 'nallah' to prevent such acts. This step was taken a couple of years ago. But the lands got inundated this year due to continuous heavy showers. "We are doomed if water is not drained from our land at the earliest. We have already incurred an expenditure of around Rs. 15,000 an acre for transplantation of paddy and also for spraying chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Now with the lands getting inundated our investment has gone down the drain. Yet, if water is pumped out, we could go for replantation of paddy afresh failing which we would be doomed," was the apprehension of

Vannurappa, another farmer. When this correspondent visited the field on Wednesday, the farmers had pressed into service as many as four tractor-mounted pumpsets to drain out the storm water from their field. They had also demolished the concrete used to block the vent of the drain to let out the water into the nallah. “Pumping out water is an additional financial burden for us. The quantum of water is so huge that the pumping out of water, at the present rate, may take another fifteen days and by then we would be losing this year’s crop”, the farmers bemoan and expressed unhappiness over the style of functioning of the irrigation department officials.

### **Vermicompost unit at Yenepoya varsity**

The vermicompost, produced using earthworms, will be used as bio-fertilizer for the gardens on the campus to enhance plant production. Taking an eco-friendly measure, Yenepoya University at Deralakatte has initiated steps to produce about 18 tonnes of vermicompost a year, by recycling all the organic waste generated on the campus. The vermicompost, produced using earthworms, will be used as bio-fertilizer for the gardens of on the campus to enhance plant production. The composting unit, which was opened on Wednesday, by Rajshekhar Puranik, Environmental Officer, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB), has six rectangular shaped vermin-bins each with a capacity to process garbage load of 750 kg to 1 tonne at a time. According to a press release issued by the university, the value of the vermicompost produced in the six bins could be worth Rs. 1.8 lakh a year.

### **Biodegradable**

The scientifically built container favoured decomposition of the organics waste and composting will start by preparing a bed made of coconut sheath, arranged in two rows, followed by the loading of biodegradable material into each composting vermibin.



## **Mixing**

Waste material will be mixed with cow dung slurry and left for primary decomposition for three weeks, after which earthworms will be left for the secondary decomposition for about 20-25 days. The process will be repeated and the vermicompost will be ready in about 40-45 days. Vice-Chancellor of the university, P. Chandramohan, said the institution was keen to play an important role in environment conservation .

## **WASP homes in on traditional rice varieties**

Kabani rice, a pesticide-free rice brand, being packed at the Wayanad Agriculture and Spices Producer Company. After scripting a success story in pesticide-free rice cultivation, the Wayanad Agriculture and Spices Producer Company (WASP) is gearing up to market its harvest under the Kabani Rice brand. A group of farmers launched WASP, the first registered agriculture-producer company in the State, in June 2013 to rejuvenate farming, especially paddy, in the district. They started paddy cultivation on 20 acres of leased land at Punchavayal, near Panamaram, last season. They spent close to Rs.25,000 an acre for cultivating traditional seed varieties such as Gandhakassala, Adukkann, Marathondy, Chomala, and Uma, a high breed variety. In addition to their yield of 20 tonnes, the company has procured 11 tonnes of pesticide-free paddy from farmers. "We harvested nearly 20 tonnes of rice and a pesticide residue test was conducted on our produce at the pesticide residue laboratory at Vellayani under the Kerala Agriculture University," K. Narayanan, managing director, WASP, told *The Hindu*. He said the company had tied-up with seven *padashekhara samitis* in the district to cultivate pesticide-free paddy on 300 acres this season. The company would procure the produce at a premium and market it under its brand, Mr. Narayanan said adding that 50 per cent of the profit would be shared among the samitis. "We are focussing on promoting organic paddy cultivation through mechanised means, ensuring sustainable income

for farmers. Fallow land will be made fertile and cultivable,” P. Vikraman, a WASP promoter and former Principal Agriculture Officer, said. The rice will be marketed through Elements India, a company based in Kozhikode. The product will be launched by film-maker and actor Joy Mathew at a function at Alakapuri Auditorium in Kozhikode at 4 p.m. on Thursday.

### **Hortcorp plans to step up procurement ahead of Onam**

The Kerala State Horticultural Products Development Corporation (Hortcorp) is preparing to step up procurement from the main vegetable-growing hubs at Kanthalloor and Vattavada in Idukki district to meet the spike in demand during Onam season. A press note quoting Hortcorp managing director V.V. Pushpangadan said the business at the festival fairs was expected to go up by five or six times in the run-up to Onam. “In addition to the mega fairs named Ona Niravu, we have opened 350 stalls and 17 mobile outlets where customers can purchase fruits and vegetables at a discount of 20 to 30 per cent. Another 25 mobile stalls will also be opened,” he said. “The corporation is procuring vegetables from domestic farmers through its district procurement centres, World Markets under the Agriculture Department, and self-help groups under the Vegetable and Fruit Promotion Council Keralam,” he said. Refuting media reports, Mr. Pushpangadan said none of the farmers at Kanthalloor or Vattavada had reported problems owing to middlemen from neighbouring States or fall in the prices of their produce.

### **Collector faces farmers' ire**

Collector M. Veerabrahmaiah faced the wrath of farmers over erratic power supply in Husnabad on Wednesday when he visited the mandal to inspect the prevailing drought conditions. Farmers and Opposition leaders intercepted him and demanded assured power supply. He managed to pacify them saying that he would submit a report to the government on prevailing drought conditions.

### **3 irrigation projects planned for Kurnool**

Three irrigation projects -- Gundrevula reservoir, Vedavathi Lift scheme and check dam at Kurnool -- have the potential to fully meet the irrigation and drinking water needs of upland region of Kurnool parliamentary constituency. The government has proposed a 20 tmcft reservoir on Tungabhadra, upstream Sunkesula barrage, to stabilise KC canal irrigation system, and also to meet the drinking water needs of the nearby mandals. The survey, instituted by the unified Andhra Pradesh government, is complete. Superintending Engineer, KC Canal, R. Nageswara Rao told *The Hindu* that the survey was complete and preparation of detailed project report (DPR) was under way and it would be completed soon. The project was envisaged at Gundrevula on Kurnool side and China Tandrapadu in Telangana. According to initial reports, the project would have a foreshore area (water spread area) of 9,360 hectares which affects seven villages in Kurnool and three to four in Telangana. The villages likely to be relocated in Kurnool are Sangala, Kotha Sangala, Chintamanupalli, Timmandoddi, Gurajala, Nagaladinne, Chinna Kothili, Cherupalli, and Rayachoti, and the villages in Mahabubnagar district are Pedda Dhanwada, Venisompur, Kesavaram and Kisannagar. The project is estimated to cost Rs. 2,300 crore and of it, Rs. 1,650 crore is required for land acquisition and rehabilitation of evacuees. The project would ensure steady supply to KC canal in Kurnool and Kadapa districts and RDS in Mahabubnagar districts. The project requires approval by both states. The Telangana State might consider the project if proportionate allocation is made for RDS canal. The back waters would spread up to Mantralayam which would have water round the year. Meanwhile, district Collector Ch. Vijayamohan and irrigation officials also inspected the site of proposed Vedavathi Lift irrigation scheme at Gulyam which would allow drawing of 8 tmcft in a span of 45 days during flood period. Two reservoirs of four tmcft each are planned at Belahal and Molagavalli, which would provide irrigation to 65,000 acres and stabilise 15,000 acres under Right Branch

Canal of TB High Level Canal. The project costing Rs. 650 crore requires pumping at two stages to a height of 80 meters. Halaharvi, Aspari, Aluru, Holagunda and Adoni mandals, which are starved of water, would benefit from the project. It does not require any inter-state approval.

### **Check dam**

The irrigation department is also working on a check dam across the Tungabhadra near Kurnool to impound 0.5 tmcft and offer a road bridge between Gondiparla and Kurnool city. The dam is estimated to cost Rs 65 crore which was sanctioned by the combined State. The dam would meet the drinking water and industrial water needs.

### **18 lakh households identified for receiving subsidised foodgrains**

The Delhi Government has completed the process of identifying beneficiaries to receive foodgrains at a subsidised rate under the National Food Security Act, 2013. Out of the 21 lakh households that applied under the scheme, the Department of Food Supplies and Consumer Affairs has identified 18 lakh households. Food and Supplies Commissioner S.S. Yadav said of the 18 lakh, nine lakh households have already started getting benefits and ration cards will be issued to the remaining households and the benefits will be provided over the next two to three months. South-West and North-West districts were among the highest in numbers of beneficiaries. The process of identification was carried out after a massive scrutiny of digitisation and field verification of each household completed, said Mr. Yadav. More than 1,500 staffers were deployed for this exercise. The details of the applicants were compared with the data of power connections, property ownership, government employees, and vehicle ownership to rule out ineligible households, he added. The department has digitised the data of all these households and a computerised system has been put in place for allocation of food grains

every month to these households through 2,400 fair price shops in Delhi.

### **Framework to boost exports**

The new NDA government's first annual Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) statement will be unveiled soon. Normally presented after the Union Budget, the FTP has usually concentrated on measures to boost exports and reduce transaction costs. It cannot explicitly reduce import or export duties — which are in the domain of the budget. However, the incentives for exporters have indirect implications for the exchequer. Employment generation in India through exports of manufactured goods has been a key objective of the FTP, which remains despite the change in nomenclature from the previous Exim Policy that was focussed on exports. A proactive policy on imports is equally necessary in a scenario where India is integrating with the rest of the world. Within the country there are minimal import restraints. A consistent policy framework is necessary to deal with items such as imports of gold and petroleum. Recently, the FTP has outlined ambitious plans for the diversification of exports, both in terms of the range of products and the destination countries. These commendable efforts have, however, not improved India's export performance which, like world trade itself, remains below par. The new government's orientation to trade cannot be really different from that of its predecessor. The Prime Minister, while inaugurating a port-based special economic zone, urged manufacturers to join in export promotion. In his Independence Day speech he called for a "make in India" movement, which has the potential to turn India into a global manufacturing hub. The emphasis in the FTP will naturally vary depending on current circumstances. Multilateral trade as embodied by the WTO received a setback with India holding out against a previously agreed Trade Facilitation Agreement. While India has its own reasons — preserving the norms for domestic food security — the fact is that the failure in Geneva has spurred moves towards free trade agreements (FTAs), regional pacts, bilateral agreements and so on. These are inferior to rule-based multilateral trade,

irrespective of any short-term gains they might confer. The Commerce Minister's call for a comprehensive review of the performance of all FTAs is noteworthy. India already has 14 agreements in force, including one with the ASEAN grouping of 10 countries, and is negotiating several others. Both India and China have free trade agreements with ASEAN, and unless cumbersome procedures relating to country of origin are scrupulously followed, India might face a flood of duty-free Chinese goods. Besides, FTAs have not exactly delivered on their promise of larger trade between signatories. These factors will surely weigh, even as India prepares to renegotiate stalled issues of the Doha round.

### **Early lessons in farming**

After creating man, “the Lord God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it,” says the Book of Genesis in the Bible. As though taking cue from it, the Kollam diocese (Latin rite) of the Catholic Church has prepared a project to attract the younger generation to farming. The best way to ensure food security is by motivating children to take up farming, says Fr. George Ribeiro, who has been appointed director of the project by Kollam Bishop Stanley Roman. Cultivation will be taken up on an 18-acre plot on the estuarine Panakkal Island of Ashtamudi Lake on the outskirts of Kollam city, near Neendakara. The property earlier housed the Shreyas project of the Quilon Social Service Society — the charity service wing of the diocese. Fr. Ribeiro told *The Hindu* that it would basically be an eco-farm tourism project, with entertainment for children. Schools will be encouraged to bring students to the farm. “Hopefully, the farm will be opened to tourists by January.” The property was purchased in 1943 for the diocese by the then Bishop, Jerome M. Fernandez. The students will be provided hands-on experience in farming. “Children will be taught to be compassionate to farm animals. “The goal is to help them develop respect for animals.” The attractions will include cattle rearing, poultry farming, fish farming, growing vegetables and nurturing interest in coconut cultivation. The farm will also have

exotic birds such as emu and ostrich. Children can also take horse rides and go boating. “The project will promote the idea of a green future,” Fr. Ribeiro said.

### **KAU seeks GI tag for nendran**

The Centre for IP Protection of Kerala Agricultural University is making efforts to secure Geographical Indications (GI) tag for Chengalikodan nendran. C.R. Elsy, head of the Centre, said that application for registration of Chengalikodan nendran is being processed at the GI registry, Chennai. The application has been filed by the Farmers’ Society. The KAU is providing technical and legal support to farmers. The GI tag for the banana that holds the place of pride in Thrissur was expected to enhance the demand for this unique product, said P. Rajendran, KAU vice-chancellor. A kind of banana cultivated in erstwhile Chengazhikode region is known as Chengazhikodan banana. It is also called Chengalikodan banana. The banana is cultivated now in Chovannur, Puzhakkal, Wadakkanchery, Pazhayannur and Ollukkara block panchayaths. It is also being offered as *kazhchakkula* at the Guruvayur Sreekrishna temple. KAU’s Center for IP Protection had played a major role in securing GI tag for Pokkali rice, Vazhakulam pineapple, Wayanad Jeerakasala rice, Wayanad Gandhakasala rice, Central Travancore jaggery and Kaipad rice. GI tag is intended to prevent unauthorised use of a registered geographical indication by others, promote economic growth and boost exports by providing legal protection. A GI registration is valid for 10 years and may be renewed after the period.

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**Farmers to Get Title Deeds for up to Four Acres**

In an attempt to address the long-pending issues of farmers in Idukki, the state Cabinet on Wednesday decided to give ‘unconditional’ title deeds for up to four acres of land in possession in the district, instead of the earlier ceiling of one acre. The decision is expected to address the concerns of farmers in Idukki who don’t have title deeds. However, there are allegations that the decision may help the land mafia in making major land purchases in the hilly regions of Idukki. As per the decision taken by the Cabinet, necessary amendments would be brought in the rules to distribute unconditional title deeds for up to four acres of land. The government decided to make amendments to Rule 5(A) and 8 (1) of Kerala Land Assignment Act, 1964. As per the proposed changes, title deeds for up to four acres will be given to those in possession of land, instead of one acre. If the land in possession is more than four acres, then the excess land should be returned to the government. Once the title deeds are issued there will be no restriction on selling the land which is under an individual’s possession, said Chief Minister Oommen Chandy while briefing the Cabinet decisions. However there will be a 25-year bar on selling land for which fresh title deeds, other than unconditional title deeds, are issued. The distribution of title deeds in Idukki district has been based on Rule 27 of Kerala Land Assignment Act.

**Instead of Planting, Farmers Consume Seed Potatoes**

Seed potatoes supplied by the Horticulture wing of Agriculture department to farmers of Bhadrak district for cultivation have been consumed by them. They, apparently, found these seed potatoes less priced than its retail rate in the market.



At least 88 farmers from seven blocks of the district were provided 90 quintals of seed potatoes after vegetable crops were damaged in Phailin last year. These were supplied at subsidised rate of ₹1,500 per quintal in November last year. Prior to supply of the seed potatoes, the Horticulture wing had set a target of harvesting 100 tonnes of potatoes from 20 acres of land by February end. Unfortunately, there has been no yield as all the seed potatoes supplied were consumed by farmers. Not only potato seeds, 10 quintals of onion seeds were also supplied by the Horticulture wing to 76 farmers in the district. These too met with the same fate. The farmers consumed the vegetable as it was available at half the cost of its market rate. Sources alleged that the Horticulture officials, without verifying the antecedents of the beneficiaries, whether they were farmers or not, had supplied them seed potatoes and onions anticipating that they may rot if not disposed of on time. Potato and onion prices have skyrocketed in the State post-Phailin last year. While in the urban areas, potatoes and onions are being sold at ₹30 and ₹40 respectively, the prices are 25 per cent higher in rural markets here. Though Assistant Director of Horticulture, Patitapaban Samantray, denied that seed potatoes were consumed, he could not say how many quintals were harvested. "We will do a follow up with the farmers the next time," he said.

### **Tuber Crisis**

- 88 farmers from seven blocks of the district were provided 90 quintals of seed potatoes after vegetable crops were damaged in Phailin last year
- 10 quintals of onion seeds were also supplied by the Horticulture wing to 76 farmers in the district
- Potato and onion prices have skyrocketed in the State post-Phailin last year

### **Persistent high inflation hurting India sovereign ratings: Moody's**

India's sovereign ratings are constrained by persistently high inflation that is

weighing on an otherwise promising economic recovery, Moody's Investors Service said in a release on Thursday. "Recurrent inflationary pressures ... keep domestic capital costs high, erode domestic purchasing power as well as savings and lower international competitiveness," the rating agency said. Moody's also said the supply response to inflation has been weak and the government-directed food distribution system has made worse the food supply constraints. Without a significant increase in food output, the risk from continued inflation could limit India's growth prospects, Moody's said.



### **Coonor tea auction volume drops**

There will be no auction at Coonor Tea Trade Association on Friday because of holiday for Vinayakar Chaturthi. Both leaf and dust auctions of Sale No: 35 will be held on Thursday. The volume has fallen again – this time by 33,000 kg over last week to total 17.42 lakh kg. Of this, 12.15 lakh kg belongs to the leaf grades and 5.27 lakh kg belongs to the dust grades. As much as 16.54 lakh kg belong to the CTC variety and only 88,000 kg to orthodox variety. The proportion of orthodox teas continues to be low in both grades. In the leaf counter, only 43,000 kg belong to orthodox while 11.72 lakh kg to CTC. Among the dusts, only 45,000 kg belong to orthodox while 4.82 lakh kg to CTC. With substantial volumes remaining unsold in previous auctions, as much as 3.56 lakh kg of such teas are being re-offered this week. In the leaf auction last week, among corporate buyers, Hindustan Unilever Ltd bought brighter liquoring varieties and orthodox Fannings. Tata Global Beverages Ltd was fairly active on good medium sorts. Duncans Tea Ltd operated on the good medium bolder broken. Godfrey Philips India Ltd showed some interest on medium broken. In the dust auction, HUL, was fairly active on good medium varieties and orthodox dusts. Duncans Tea

selected some better mediums. Tata Global and did not operate.

### **Rubber rules steady on mixed cues**

Spot rubber ruled unchanged on Wednesday, as limited availability of rubber in the local market coupled with slight gains overseas balanced poor local demand and talk of improved supply. The most-active February contract on Tokyo Commodity Exchange ended at 200 yen ( Rs. 116.28) a kg. The most-active September contract on the National Multi Commodity Exchange ended at Rs. 12,730 a quintal, up Rs. 16 from the previous close. The October contract ended at Rs. 12,625, up Rs. 18 from the previous close. Spot rubber rates ( Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 129 (129); RSS-5: 125 (125); ISNR-20: 111.10 and Latex 89.45.

### **Gujarat's milk unions dwarf private dairy players**

It is a well-known fact that Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF) is India's largest dairy concern. Less known, however, is the size of some of its constituent district-level unions. The Banaskantha and Mehsana district milk producers' unions saw sales of roughly Rs. 4,300 crore each in 2013-14. This was more than Nestle India's gross sales of Rs. 4,071.22 crore from its 'milk products and nutrition' business in 2013. The two unions' average milk procurement of 25-29 lakh litres per day (LLPD) is higher than the 20 LLPD by the Chennai-based Hatsun Agro Product Ltd. The latter, India's largest private sector dairy by milk volumes handled, recorded net sales of Rs. 2,481.20 crore in 2013-14. GCMMF's top five unions – Banaskantha, Mehsana, Kaira, Sabarkantha and Surat – procure over 10 LLPD each. This is more than the 8.33 LLPD by Heritage Foods Ltd, a leading Hyderabad-based listed dairy company with net sales of Rs. 1,328.19 crore in 2013-14.

### **Spices Board to award licence for small cardamom sale**

The Spices Board has initiated steps to award licence for conducting auction for cardamom for the block years 2014-17. The Board has invited expressions of interest from prospective entrepreneurs/auctioneers in this regard. A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board, said that this initiative would open up the marketing system of small cardamom and is expected to attract more players to the trade. It would also result in better price realisation for growers by increased sales transactions and buyer participation, he added. License for e-auction will be issued only for the centres established by the Board for small cardamom at Puttady in Idukki and Bodinayakkanur in Tamil Nadu. The manual auction centre for small cardamom can be established anywhere in India other than in the States wherein the Board has already established e-auction centres.

### **Trade promotion**

The Board is committed to promoting free trade in small cardamom and is in the process of exploring all avenues for facilitating opening of alternate marketing channels for small cardamom. Through revised auctioneer license system, the Board is hoping to strengthen and broaden the marketing channels for cardamom through increased competition and participation, he added.

**THE ECONOMIC TIMES**

### **Assam tea trade union is joining hands with West Bengal counterparts**

A new blend is in brewing. Not only of groups of diametrically opposite views, but from different geographical locations too. The new mix is in the tea trade unionism, on issue of wage structure for the workers of this century old labour

intensive green culture. First day of September is likely to be the first exposure of this wider conglomeration. The pending issue of wage settlement in West Bengal has brought National level trade Unions like CITU or INTUC, closer along with local level but powerful organizations in the state tea belt. To name, Darjeeling Terai Dooars Plantation Labour Union (DTDPLU) affiliated to Gorkha Janamukti Morcha in Darjeeling hills or Progressive Tea Workers' Union, the trade Union wing of Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikash Parishad. The conglomeration of 21 tea trade Unions, however do not have INTUC, the trade Union wing of ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal in it. While the newly formed bunch is preparing for its larger scale movement to have the pending dispute resolved, INTUC from Assam has come forward to join hands with the platform with a proposal to spread this movement beyond boundary of West Bengal.

If gets crystallized, the whole development can significantly alter working agreement, economics and whole industry- feel industry insiders. Same is the workers view. "Assam, that contributes 50% to national tea yield, hosts around 8 lakh workers. And 90% of them are under INTUC banner. Thus Assam, INTUC's joining hands with this conglomeration in West Bengal can become a never before kind of large force to carry forward workers struggle," said Mr. Ajit Sarkar, West Bengal CITU Vice President. "To have the views of all stakeholders on wage structuring, the central Government has called for a meeting on the 1st September. We will raise our voice in We will raise our voice in unison there," said Mr. Sarkar. In West Bengal last tea wage settlement between workers, employers and State Government expired in 31st March 2014. The new settlement could not come out take off even after five rounds of marathon meetings. Against that, in Assam, it is going to expire by next couple of months. "At this juncture, the handshaking is an important factor to create a major stir in the tea industry," said Mr. Tej Kumar Toopo, Tej Kumar Toppo General Secretary Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikash Parishad (ABAVP) West Bengal state general Secretary. However,

many important officials of major planters organizations do not find the handshaking as something to host very positive for the industry.

### **Pomegranate prices dive on high supply, low quality**

Pomegranate prices have dropped to almost half of the previous year's levels in Maharashtra, the top producer and exporter of the fruit that is an excellent source of dietary fibre and vitamins. Higher supplies, a decline in exports and inferior quality because of an erratic climate have led to the price drop, say growers. Pomegranate acreage has increased substantially in Maharashtra as the fruit commanded premium prices in domestic as well as export markets. According to the All India Pomegranate Growers' Association, pomegranate is planted on about 40,000 hectares in the Marathwada and Vidarbha regions of the state, compared with 30,000 two-three years ago.

## **Business Standard**

### **UP sugar cane allocation meetings next month**

Even as the stand-off between the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government and private sugar mills on the cane pricing continues, the cane department on Wednesday announced dates for the annual cane reservation meetings next month. These come before the crushing season and are used to allocate cane areas to mills on the basis of demand. But the mills had told the government about the suspension of operations in the coming season till the resolution of demands, including the linking of cane price to sugar one. These meetings are attended by representatives of mills and cane societies. According to the schedule, the meetings for the Saharanpur would be on September 10; Faizabad and Devipatan, September 11; Meerut September 12; Moradabad, September 13; Gorakhpur, September 15; Bareilly, September 16; Deoria, September 18; and Lucknow,

September 19. A sugar sector official said the mills would not participate in these. Last year, the mills' representatives did not turn up due to pending demands. But the matter was resolved and the mills had agreed to start crushing on assurances by the state, including evolving a permanent cane-pricing formula. Under the law, if mills fail to provide their cane demands, the government has the power to allocate cane area based on the previous year's demand. Kisan Jagriti Manch president Sudhir Panwar told Business Standard that the government was right in continuing with the meetings even in the face of boycott by mills. "I am confident that the issues would be sorted out in time before the start of the crushing season. The boycott of cane meetings is actually a tactic of mills to pressurise the government against any increase in cane price this year," he noted. Last year, the government had retained the cane price of Rs 280 a quintal. Panwar claimed that at this level, it would be a losing proposition for farmers due to the effect of drought and inflation, which had increased farm input costs. The mills say successive high-cane prices in UP had hit the sugar sector, resulting in massive accumulated losses, besides cane arrears. The private mills are currently burdened with arrears worth about Rs 5,000-crore for the 2013-14 crushing season. The Allahabad High Court is currently hearing a case pertaining to arrears; the next date of hearing is September 3, 2014. Last year, 119 mills (95 private mills, 23 cooperatives, one corporation) had collectively crushed 69.78 million tonnes (mt) of cane and produced 6.47 mt of sugar. The recovery percentage had stood at 9.27 per cent. UP's sugar economy is estimated at Rs 30,000 crore, including procurement of cane by mills; unorganised 'khandsari' (unpolished sugar) and gur (jaggery) units; and local sales.

### **Spices Board invites EoI for cardamom auction**

The Spices Board has invited Expressions of Interest (EoI) from prospective

entrepreneurs / auctioneers for awarding cardamom auction licence for a period of three years from 2014. This initiative will open up the marketing system of small cardamom and is expected to attract more players to the small cardamom trade and may result in better price realisations, a press release said. Licence for e-auction will be issued only for the e-auction centres established by the board for small cardamom at Puttady in Kerala and Bodinayakanur in Tamil Nadu. Manual auction centre for small cardamom can be established anywhere in India other than in the states wherein the board has already established e-auction centres. "Spices Board is committed to promoting free trade in small cardamom and is in the process of exploring all avenues for facilitating opening of alternate marketing channels for small cardamom," the release added. It said, "For the Indian small cardamom industry to remain competitive in the global markets free trade of this commodity must be promoted and alternate channels for the domestic marketing of small cardamom should be devised along with removal of the rules which restrict the domestic marketing and sale of small cardamom." "Through revised Auctioneer license system we are hoping to strengthen and broaden the Marketing channels for Cardamom through increased competition and participation," said A Jayathilak, Chairman, Spices Board. Earlier, in 2007 the Spices Board revolutionised the E-auction system for small cardamom by introducing electronic auction. Board established E-auction centers at Bodinayakanur in August 2007 and at Puttadi in December 2007.

### **Onion sowing picks up in Maharashtra owing to good rainfall**

The sowing of onion in Maharashtra which is still lagging for the current kharif season compared to that of the last, has vigorously picked up last week due to consistent rainfall in the state. Maharashtra is the largest producer of onion in the country and is one of the primary determinants of the wholesale and retail prices of the crop in the country. As per official data, the current year sowing in the



state week before last was 1,717 hectares (ha) which has gone up to 12,258 ha by end of last week, registering a rise of almost 613%. In comparison to the sowing of the crop for the same period last year 2013, the current sowing was lagging by almost 30% going by the sowing of the crop for the week ended August 14, 2014. However, by the end of last week, the sowing area has improved and the differential over last year's sowing in the same period has come down to just 19%. While the crop sowing till end of last week of August in 2013 was 34,165 ha, for 2014 same period it is recorded at 33298 ha, 40% higher than total crop sowing recorded week before week before last. As per official information, an area of 1,34,774 hectares of onion crop was affected by hailstorm during early this year, 2014 in the state. The State Government assessed that more than 50% of area of the Rabi onion was affected due to hailstorm and unseasonal rains. However the state is quite hopeful of good a crop in the late kharif season crop. Besides the central government has asked 'early Kharif' producing states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to bring more area under onion cultivation to enhance overall production of onion, said officials. To enhance the production and productivity of vegetables including onion, the state receives various types of support from the centre for seed production, vegetable cultivation in open fields under schemes of Integrated Nutrient Management (INM)/ Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and organic farming. Assistance is also extended for constitution of low cost onion storage structure to prevent post harvest losses. Besides, the scheme provides for setting up markets at different levels viz. wholesale, rural/apni Mandi, retail markets and even vending carts. Government is also implementing scheme on Vegetable Initiative for Urban Clusters (VIUC) under the overall aegis of the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) which covers these activities. In addition, the Integrated Scheme for Agriculture Marketing (ISAM) also provides for creation of post harvest infrastructure including storage. State governments have also been asked to

exempt fruits and vegetables from the purview of the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) Act to enable direct sale of fruits and vegetables by the farmers, said officials.

### **Jeera up 0.5% on spot demand**

Jeera prices rose 0.54% to Rs 11,210 per quintal in futures trade today as participants created speculative positions amid pick up in demand in the spot market. At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, jeera for delivery in September moved up by Rs 60, or 0.54% to Rs 11,210 per quintal with an open interest of 7,272 lots. Similarly, the spice for delivery in October traded higher by Rs 45, or 0.40% to Rs 11,310 per quintal in 2,904 lots. Analysts attributed the rise in jeera futures to fresh positions created by speculators amid pick-up in demand in the spot markets against restricted arrivals from producing regions.