

## Farmer introduces innovative techniques

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*Ravindra Naik*

KARNATAKA, KONDADY, February 28, 2014 - A small board leads to his three-and-a-half acre farm at Kondady village, about 18 kilometres from Udupi, where you find the innovative farmer Ravindra Naik (32) checking the growth of bananas on plantain trees.

Mr. Naik, who belongs to the Marathi Naik community, a Scheduled Tribe, received the R. Dwarakinath International Society of Extension Education Innovative Farmer National Award, 2013, at the University of

Agricultural Sciences in Bangalore on December 5, 2013. The certificate states: "This award is conferred for excellence in agriculture and allied fields, showing innovativeness and increasing productivity on his farm."

Besides growing plantains and Shankarpura jasmine on an acre of land, Mr. Naik grows paddy on 1.5 acres, and areca, pepper, and vegetables on the remaining one acre. He uses only organic fertilizers such as chicken-manure slurry and cow-dung slurry. What's more, he makes a clean profit of about Rs. 1.25 lakh a year on an average.

Educated only till class six, he left school to help his father in agriculture. His father used to grow only paddy. "When I saw that my father used to pay a lot to get cow-dung slurry, I started to think on reducing cost on the slurry. This kindled my interest in agriculture," he said.

Mr. Naik also diversified into cultivating other crops. To reduce costs, he got a loan of Rs. 3 lakh from the Hiriyaadka Farmers Cooperative Bank about four years ago. With this loan, he built a poultry farm, where he rears 3,000 hens. He has three cows.

He got a well dug and procured an irrigation pumpset free of cost under the Ganga Kalyana scheme. He got five sprinklers and 600 feet of pipelines.

He gets a yield of 52 quintals of paddy from the first crop and 26 quintals in the second crop, which he sells directly to houses. He also sells vegetables such as ladyfinger, ash-gourd and yellow pumpkins in nearby shops. "I get Rs. 3,500 to Rs. 4,000 every month from my 200 jasmine plants. I get four crops of bananas in a year from my 700 plantain trees. I get Rs. 4,000 per crop," he said. Cows yield him three to four litres of milk. He keeps one-and-a half litres for his household consumption. By mixing the remaining milk with poultry feed, he has increased their feed Conversion Ratio and reduced the mortality of birds.

# Rs. 7.50 crore spent under farmers security scheme

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TIRUCHI, February 28, 2014 - About Rs. 7.50 crore has been disbursed as assistance among farmers so far during the current financial year under the Farmers Protection Scheme in the district, said Jayashree Muralidharan, Collector.

Speaking at a function to distribute assistance under the farmers security and social security schemes at Tiruvanaikovil recently, the Collector said 16,000 farmers and their family members had benefited under the scheme.

The Collector said in 2011-12, Rs. 4.5 crore had been allotted benefiting 7,000 people and during the succeeding financial year, Rs. 9 crore had been disbursed.

R. Manoharan, Chief Whip, gave away assistance to the tune of Rs. 66 lakh to 1,507 people on the occasion. He highlighted various schemes being implemented by the State government. Bifurcation of Manapparai taluk and Tiruchi taluk was aimed at taking the government machinery closer to the masses, he said.

A. Jaya, Mayor, and M. Paranjothi, MLA, spoke.

## Officials manning DPCs demand bribe: farmers

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TIRUNELVELI, February 28, 2014 - *Collector assures them it would not happen again*

The monthly farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Thursday witnessed levelling of bribery charges against officials manning a few paddy Direct Procurement Centres (DPCs). Since harvest of 'pisanam' paddy is under way, the district administration has so far opened 15 DPCs and 18 more are to be opened shortly. Raising this issue in the meet, a few farmers said the officials were demanding "30 per cent commission towards paddy handling charges" from the farmers bringing paddy to the DPCs.

"Instead of meeting the demands of the officials, we'd prefer to sell our produce to private buyers," the affected farmers said. Collector M. Karunakaran, who presided, assured the farmers that it would not happen again.

A few farmers charged that they could not get pattas transferred in their names even after submitting applications in the special fast track patta camps and during the AMMA (Assured Maximum Service to Marginalised People in All villages) camps.

Ganesan, a farmer, said the realtors, with the connivance of officials in the Local Planning Authority and the Corporation, were converting fertile paddy fields into housing plots after rendering these areas inaccessible to land owners by erecting barbed wire fences around these lands, now left barren for want of water for irrigation. "Besides cancelling the permission given by the Corporation and the LPA, the wire fences should be removed," he said.

District Revenue Officer P. Umamaheshwari said no permission was given for converting cultivable lands into housing plots after Dr. Karunakaran assumed office here.

Farmer Maha. Pauldurai urged the Collector to initiate steps for reviving the abandoned Tamirabharani – Karumaeniyar and Nambiyar linking project which was the only hope for the people of the dry Nanguneri, Thisaiyanvilai, Radhapuram and Sattankulam areas.

Dr. Karunakaran, who urged the farmers to switch over to drip irrigation practices, handed over farm equipment worth Rs. 21.25 lakh and horticulture inputs worth Rs. 70,000 under National Horticulture Mission and Integrated Horticulture Development Programme.

Joint Director of Agriculture K. Soundararajan, Deputy Director of Horticulture S. Raja Mohamed, Director, IOB Regional Self Employment Training Institute, S. Nambiraj, and officials participated.

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## District budget lays stress on farm sector, water supply

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*THRISSUR, February 28, 2014 - Scheme for improving quality of education to be launched*

The Thrissur District Panchayat budget presented on Thursday lays emphasis on development projects in the farm sector and drinking water supply.

Presenting the annual budget, District Panchayat Vice-President Leela Subrahmanian said Rs. 42.5 crore had been earmarked for Jala Samridhi Project. Of this, 50 per cent would be given by the State government.

As in previous years, the District Panchayat has planned many innovative schemes in the education sector.

The D Plus-less district scheme, which aims at improving the quality of education, is one of them. Under the scheme, additional educational materials will be provided to students in those subjects in which they usually score low marks.

“The district used to score an average pass percentage of 97 in the SSLC examination. But only 54 per cent of them will get a chance for higher education. When the District Panchayat conducted a study with the help of the District Institute of Education and Training, it was found that the rest of the 43 per cent students are mostly D plus scorers with minimum marks,” C.C. Sreekumar, District Panchayat President, said.

Most of the students are scoring low marks in subjects such as English, mathematics, Hindi and science, he noted.

**Handbook for English** - The District Panchayat, with the help of DIET and the State Institute of English Language, prepared an additional handbook for English last year.

“It proved a success. So the District Panchayat plans to prepare such materials in mathematics, Hindi, and science too.” He said in addition to these study materials, the teachers under the District Panchayat would be given a special training during the vacation.

An amount of Rs. 4.50 lakh has been earmarked for providing scholarships for physically challenged students.

An amount of Rs. 14.90 crore has been allotted for road development and another Rs. 41.63 crore has been allocated for poverty eradication programme. The health sector will get Rs. 10.50 lakh. The jagratha samithis formed under the Nirbhaya project for the protection of women and children will get Rs. 10 lakh. The budget envisages a revenue of Rs. 172.61 crore and expenditure of Rs. 163.61 crore.

## Farmers protest erratic power supply

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NELLORE, February 28, 2014 - Farmers belonging to different villages staged dharna at the Nandavaram electricity sub-station in Marripadu mandal here demanding that the officials ensure proper supply of power in the villages.

The angry farmers held rasta roko on the road in protest against the indifference of the electricity department to their pleas for improvement in supply as per the promises of the Government. -Staff Reporter

# Agricultural expo to showcase advancements in the sector

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THRISSUR, February 28, 2014 - The South Indian Agricultural Exhibition showcasing the advancements in the sector will be opened on Friday on the Kerala Agriculture University main campus.

According to P.Rajendran, KAU Vice-Chancellor and M.P. Vincent, MLA, chairman of the organising committee, the arrangements for the successful conduct of the exhibition have been completed.

In all, 240 stalls have been set up on the campus. The exhibition will be open to the public from 10 a.m. on Friday and the formal inauguration will be done by Chief Minister Oommen Chandy in the evening. Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan will preside over the function. Agricultural mechanisation will be the topic for the seminar on the first day. A magic show by world award winner Gopinath Muthukad will be held in the evening.

The highlight of the second day will be a technology meet in which about 50 technologies and machinery with commercial viability developed by the Kerala Agricultural University will be presented before entrepreneurs.

An innovative design for Intensive Integrated Vertical Farming system exhibited at the technology meet is a model worth emulating in urban areas.

This model accommodates goat, rabbit, poultry, azolla and fodder or vegetables in less than one cent of land.

Power operated coconut dehusking machine is another attraction. Mainly intended for large scale dehusking of coconuts, the capacity of the machine is 450-500 nuts per hour. A simple, portable and light weight hand-operated effective tool for separating copra from coconut shells is another attraction.

## Depleting groundwater table causes concern

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*Average rainfall in district has come down drastically*

*The dried up Thally Lake. —Photo: R. ARIVANANTHAM*

THALLY (KRISHNAGIRI DISTRICT), February 28, 2014 - Thally situated 1000 metres above sea level, surrounded by valleys and cliffs, was once called 'Little England' by the

erstwhile British rulers due to its salubrious weather prevailing round-the-year. But, it has lost its charm during the past seven - eight years which is a cause for concern, say farmers. Insufficient rain, mining of hills for mineral wealth (granite and blue metal) and improper maintenance of water bodies are cited as reasons.

### **Farm houses**

P. Prakash, district panchayat ward no. 3 representative, lamented that the Thally Lake and its system lakes in the down stream like Ramanayakkan Lake became dry due to urbanisation, mushrooming farm houses and private layouts. He also alleged that the waterways and in some places water bodies were encroached upon by influential persons.



Mr. Prakash suggested that the lakes should be filled with Hogenakkal water. A mega scheme like Hogenakkal Drinking Water Project is the need of the hour to safeguard thousands of farmers depending on agriculture and horticulture.

Aswath Narayanan of Belagondapalli told *The Hindu* that the authorities instead of strengthening the breached bunds of the lake during 2004 floods, diverted the water to some other areas. This resulted in encroachment of catchment areas and water channels, besides water flowing into Ramanayakkan Lake in Hosur.

S.M. Krishna Reddy (72) of Deveganapalli said that due to insufficient rain, many lakes had become dry and was the reason for the groundwater table going below 1,200 feet. A decade ago, water table was just 10 to 15 feet below the ground level, says Mr. Reddy.

R. Sekar, taluk secretary of Communist Party of India (Marxist), said that the excess water that overflowed from the water bodies would fill up over 30 system lakes.

An official attached to the Water Resources Organisation of PWD said that there were 1,300 lakes under the control of WRO and four dams in the district. The average rainfall in the district had come down drastically during the last one decade, the official added.

## ‘Rs. 1.36 crore procurement payments settled through banks’

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THANJAVUR, February 28, 2014 - *No need for patta, chitta or adangal receipt*

The disbursement of money for the paddy procured from farmers by the Tamil Nadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) in the district through banks is working well, and so far Rs 1.36 crore has been disbursed to the farmers, said District Collector N. Subbaiyan here on Thursday.

Presiding over the farmers’ grievances day meeting at the collectorate, he appealed to farmers to extend their cooperation for the effective implementation of the new system. Farmers will not be asked patta, chitta or adangal and loan arrears will not be deducted in the payments, he said.

Mr. Subbaiyan said that silt removal from canals and rivers have been taken up by the Public Works Department (PWD) and will remain unaffected by the Election Commission’s Code of Conduct and added that it is a routine work and has been taken up before announcement of elections. Monitoring committees with farmers as members have been formed to check the progress of the silt removal works, he said.

A section of farmers led by Sukumaran, a sugarcane farmer, staged a walk out from the meeting demanding higher procurement price for paddy and sugarcane by the Government, waiver of co-operative loans and to scrap the proposed methane extraction project from district.

V. Jeevakumar, a farmer from Royamundanpatti village demanded water to be released from Mettur to save the summer crop raised on 16,000 hectares in the district. Selvaraj of Annappanpettai village said that appealed for silt removal from Jambu Cauvery River. PWD engineers said that silt was removed from 10 km stretch in the river last year. The silt in remaining 9-km will be removed this year.

## 3.29 lakh animals to be vaccinated

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TIRUCHI, February 28, 2014 - About 3.29 lakh heads of cattle would be vaccinated for foot-and-mouth disease in Tiruchi district during the sixth round of the vaccination drive scheduled to begin on March 1. The drive will go on for 21 days ,.across the district and all panchayat presidents have been instructed to inform farmers about the schedule well in advance, Collector Jayashree Muralidharan said in a release. Already, grama sabha meetings have been held in all village panchayats and all cattle owners have been requested to

ensure that their animals are vaccinated. The vaccine was fully safe and the farmers need not entertain any apprehensions that the cattle could suffer abortions or yield less milk on being vaccinated, she said.

## Water level

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**Mettur** - The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 49.65 feet on Thursday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 965 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Thursday stood at 53 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 158.80 cusecs and 504.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 72.48 feet (118 feet). The dam had an inflow of 41 cusecs and 330.50 cusecs of water was discharged.

The water level in Periyar dam stood at 110.50 feet on Thursday with an inflow of 75 cusecs and a discharge of 100 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 33.43 feet with no inflow and a discharge of 40 cusecs. The combined storage in Periyar credit was 828 mc.ft. There was no rainfall recorded during the 24 hours ending at 8.30 a.m. on Thursday.

## Pulses cultivation in full swing in Tiruvarur

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TIRUVARUR, February 28, 2014 - *Collector says black gram is being raised on 55,166 hectares of land*

Pulses cultivation is going on in full swing in Tiruvarur district, said S. Natarajan, District Collector, at Tiruvarur on Thursday.

Presiding over the monthly farmers grievances day meeting, the Collector said that black gram had been raised on 55,166 hectares of land so far. He said that green gram had been raised on 46,911 hectares of land. Summer paddy had been transplanted on 363 hectares of land. Cotton had been raised on 1,344 hectares.

He said that 34,861 tonnes of urea had so far been distributed among farmers and 11,174 tonnes of Di Ammonium Phosphate had been distributed besides 6,102 tonnes of potash. Farmers appealed to the Collector to take up dredging of rivers and canals before announcement of elections.

Masilamani, district secretary of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam, said that Vettar in Tiruvarur district had become a drainage river. Walls were built on either side in some portion of the river.

He said that deficiencies in the present crop insurance scheme should be removed. He said the new modified crop insurance scheme should not be introduced.

Crop insurance scheme should be changed to benefit individual farmer.

S. Mahalingam, District Co-ordinator of Agriculture Crop Insurance Company of India Ltd, said claims of Rs. 277.60 crore had been settled for samba and thaladi in 2012. A total of 1,76,414 farmers had benefitted out of this.

The Collector said that groundwater table had improved because of dykes built across rivers and artificial recharge taken up in tanks and ponds in the district.

# Van to transport vegetables

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KRISHNAGIRI, February 28, 2014 - With a view to increase the shelf life of the vegetables transported to the government-owned Farm Fresh outlets in Chennai, an air-conditioned van was given to the Chettipalli Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society. The air-conditioned van costing Rs. 19.70 lakh was handed over to the officials of the society by Collector T.P. Rajesh on Monday.

## Planting the desire to nurture a green thumb

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*Options galore: In addition to plants, Perunthalaivar Kamaraj Krishi Vigyan Kendra outlets in Puducherry also sell pets and healthy food and drink choices. —Photo: S.S. Kumar*

PUDUCHERRY, February 28, 2014 - If you are looking to build a kitchen garden with a variety of herbs and vegetables or just add a dash of colour to your home with some roses and other flowers, the new outlets of Perunthalaivar Kamaraj Krishi Vigyan Kendra (PKKV) have the solution.

As of last week, the PKKV has opened two outlets called the 'Arumai Nutri Home' and the 'Hi-Tech Horti Park' to dispense plants, potting mixture and much more.

### **Solutions according to space**

The Arumai Nutri Home outlets in Ellaipillaichavady and on East Coast Road (ECR) offer a number of choices of plants for all kinds of homes, whether it is for a large garden or if the need is for just an indoor potted plant. In addition to plants, they also sell pets including pigeons, love birds, hamsters, guinea pigs and rabbits. Additionally, there are some healthy food and drink choices with different kinds of syrups, soups and food supplements.

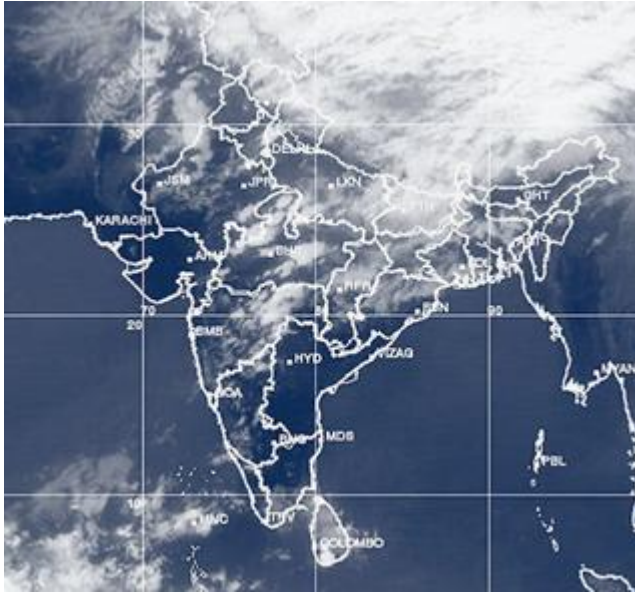
"I don't have space in my house for a full-fledged garden, but I have been passing by the ECR outlet for the past few days and the roses and other flowering plants look so beautiful I could not resist buying something," Riyaz, a customer from Tagore Nagar, said.

Many people simply come in to have a snack, but others ask for advice on how to grow their plants, and those living in apartments and smaller houses often buy our potting mixture, store manager of the ECR branch Mani said.

"We opened our first branch in Ellaipillaichavady around three months ago. Since then, we received an overwhelming response, with over Rs. 30,000 worth of sales on a daily basis. The Chief Minister then encouraged us to open more such outlets, so we opened the second outlet on ECR on Friday," Principal of the PKKV Mohan Souri said.

Depending on the response we get in the second centre, there are plans to open more such centres, he said.

# Weather



INSAT PICTURE AT 11-30 hrs. Observations recorded at 8-30 a.m. on February 27.

## ANDHRA PRADESH

Anantapur	35	21	0	0
Arogyavaram	33	16	0	0
Bapatla	31	18	0	3
Calingapatnam	30	19	0	0
Gannavaram	32	20	0	22
Hanamkonda	35	19	0	0
Hyderabad AP	31	20	0	1
Kakinada	32	22	0	1
Khammam	33	20	0	0
Kavali	31	20	0	9
Kurnool	35	21	0	0
Mahabubnagar	34	20	0	0
Machilipatnam	30	20	0	0
Nandyal	35	23	0	12
Narasapur	32	20	0	0
Nellore	32	22	0	10
Nizamabad	36	20	0	0
Ongole	33	20	0	2
Ramagundam	33	22	0	0
Tirupathi AP	34	21	0	3
Tuni	32	21	0	0
Vizag AP	31	19	0	3
Vizag	29	21	0	19

## KARNATAKA

Agumbe	33	15	0	0
Bangalore AP	31	16	0	tr
Bangalore	32	18	0	tr
Bagalkote	33	17	18	18
Belgaum AP	33	19	0	0
Bellary	36	19	0	0
Bijapur	34	19	6	6
Chitradurga	33	19	0	0
Chickmagalur	32	17	0	0
Gadag	34	19	6	6
Gulbarga	35	21	1	1



Hassan	32	14	0	0
Honavar	33	23	0	0
Karwar	34	24	0	0
Madikeri	25	17	0	5
Mangalore AP	34	24	0	0
Mysore	33	21	0	0
Mandya	33	19	0	tr
Panambur	34	25	0	0
Raichur	33	21	0	0
Shirali	33	24	0	0
<b>KERALA</b>				
Alappuzha	33	25	0	53
Kannur	34	26	0	5
Kochi AP	35	23	0	5
Kottayam	37	24	0	6
Kozhikode	35	25	0	tr
Punalur	37	19	0	16
Thiruvanantha				
-puram AP	33	23	0	187
Thiruvanantha				
-puram City	35	22	0	55
Vellanikkara	36	25	0	0
<b>TAMIL NADU</b>				
Adiramapattinam	34	21	0	23
Chennai	31	21	0	10
Chennai AP	31	20	0	8
Coimbatore AP	33	21	0	0
Coonoor	21	11	0	118
Cuddalore	31	21	0	17
Dharmapuri	33	18	0	4
Kanyakumari	33	24	0	85
Karaikal	31	24	0	8
Kodaikanal	20	10	0	29
Madurai AP	36	23	0	10
Nagapattinam	31	24	0	12
Palayamkottai	35	24	0	37
Pamban	32	26	0	63
Parangipettai	32	21	0	26
Puducherry	31	20	0	31
Salem	35	19	0	0
Thanjavur	33	23	0	11
Tiruchi AP	34	21	0	13
Tirupattur	34	19	0	11
Tiruttani	33	19	0	4
Tondi	31	23	0	76
Tuticorin	32	24	0	44
Ooty	22	7	0	1
Valparai	31	11	0	14
Vellore	33	19	0	1
<b>LAKSHADWEEP</b>				
Amini Divi	34	26	0	74
Minicoy	33	27	0	17
<b>OTHER STATIONS</b>				
Kolkata (Alipore)	30	20	0	41
Mumbai	28	23	0	9
New Delhi	26	13	tr	50

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (trace) and total rainfall in mm since January 01, 2014.

DRY WEATHER IN  
ANDHRA PRADESH

**CHENNAI:** Rainfall occurred at a few places over north interior Karnataka. Isolated rainfall occurred over coastal and south interior Karnataka.

Dry weather prevailed over Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Lakshadweep.

The chief amounts of rainfall recorded in centimetres are:

**Karnataka:** Shirahatti (Gadag dt) 5, Shikaripur (Shimoka dt) 3, Hanumansagar (Koppal dt) 2, Afazalpur HMS (Gulberga dt), Bydgi (Haveri dt), (Alamatty HMS and Zalki cross (both Bijapur dt) and Lakshmeshwar (Gadag dt) 1 each.

Bidar, Arogyavaram and Nandigama recorded the lowest minimum temperature of 16 degree Celsius in the plains of the region.

**FORECAST (Valid until Saturday morning):** Rain or thundershowers would occur at a few places over Telangana.

Isolated rain or thundershowers may occur over Kerala, Lakshadweep and Karnataka.

Mainly dry weather will prevail over Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and Rayalaseema and dry weather will prevail over coastal Andhra Pradesh.

Hail storm warning: Isolated hail storm may occur over Telangana during next 48 hours.

Outlook for subsequent two days: No significant change.

hindustantimes

## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Sunny

Friday, Feb 28

Max Min

30° | 24°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 94

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:25

Sunset: 06:17

Barometer: 1013

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Saturday, Mar 1

Max Min

31° | 23°

Extended Forecast for a week

Sunday  
Mar 2



31° | 22°

Partly Cloudy

Monday  
Mar 3



25° | 22°

Overcast

Tuesday  
Mar 4



26° | 23°

Overcast

Wednesday  
Mar 5



25° | 23°

Overcast

Thursday  
Mar 6



26° | 23°

Overcast

## Krishi Mela ends with call to promote farmers

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KANPUR: Governor of Uttarakhand [Aziz Qureshi](#) said that 85% of the population lives in villages and the farmers should be strengthened to increase the production of crops. He was speaking as the chief guest on the last day of the Krishi Mela at Chandra Shekhar Azad [University of Agriculture](#) and Technology on Thursday.

He also spoke about the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi in the independence of the country. On his arrival in the university, the governor garlanded the statue of Chandra Shekhar Azad.

Over 8,000 farmers gathered details about better ways of farming during the fair.

Around 115 agri-stalls were set up during the Krishi Mela.

CSA vice-chancellor [Munna Singh](#) highlighted the achievements of CSA in terms of education and research work. He urged farmers to adopt crop diversification and integrated farming system. The farmers should not make indiscriminate use fertilizers. Bio-fertilizers and organic fertilizers should be used to get sustained crop growth.

## Punjab's expert panel on agrarian issues has no farmer representative

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PATIALA: The [Punjab government](#) is in the process of constituting an expert committee to ponder over agriculture crises in the state, but without having even a single farmer or their representative on board. The government is in the final phase of setting up a nine-member committee to deal with major issues, which the state's farm sector is witnessing today, including agriculture crises and rural indebtedness.

Absence of farmers' representatives in the committee has irked peasant organizations, considered as major pressure groups in Punjab for raising issues about peasantry. "Formation of such committees is a cosmetic exercise. How could they discuss the problems of peasantry or agriculture in the absence of farmers' representatives in the committee? Rather, there should be at least 4-5 members with farming background in such a committee," said Sukhdev Singh Kokri, general secretary of [Bharatiya Kisan Union](#) (Ugrahan).

Proposed to be headed by chairman of Punjab State Farmers Commission, G S Kalkat, the committee will have vice-chancellors of Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Ludhiana, and [Guru Angad Dev Veterinary University](#) (GADVASU), Ludhiana as its members, sources said. Besides, senior agri-economist R S Sidhu, former chairman of [Commission for Agricultural Costs](#) and Prices, T Haque, and a former Union minister of agriculture will also be on board.

Secretary to the department of agriculture, Kahan Singh Pannu, has confirmed that the

committee was being formed. Confirming the names of members, Pannu said, "The committee is being formed to crystallize decisions taken and observations made during the recently concluded agriculture summit."

## THE HINDU Business Line

### Spot rubber perks up

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**Kottayam, February 27:** Spot rubber prices improved on Thursday. Sentiments were catalysed as the Government permitted procurement of RSS 4 until prices touch Rs. 171 a kg..

Sheet rubber improved to Rs. 148 (146) a kg, according to traders.

The grade closed firm at Rs. 147 (146) and Rs. 144 (143) a kg respectively, according to Rubber Board and dealers.

RSS 3 (spot) weakened to Rs. 132.77 (133.04) a kg at Bangkok.

#### **Futures rise**

The March futures improved to ¥215.3 ( Rs. 131.13) during the day session but then remained inactive in the night session on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates ( Rs. /kg): RSS-4: 148 (146); RSS-5: 146 (144.50); Ungraded: 142 (141); ISNR 20: 143.50 (143) and Latex 60%: 120 (120).

### Kerala okays scheme for buying rubber

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**Kottayam, February 27:** The Kerala Government has permitted rubber agencies to procure RSS 4 grade rubber at a price Rs. 2 higher than the Kottayam market rates.

Rubber procurement will continue till the prices reach Rs. 171 a kg, the average price for the three years from 2009-10 to 2011-12.

Agencies including Rubbermark (Rubber Marketing Federation), Marketfed (Kerala State Marketing Federation) and other bodies under Rubber Board will procure rubber directly from the growers. A total of 10,000 tonnes would be procured in the first phase.

Procurement agencies will get Rs. 6/kg as handling charges. In case the agencies make profit, they have to return the charges claimed for handling.

The agencies should also sell the rubber at a higher price and ensure that they should not incur any loss.

The societies involved should procure rubber recording the name, address, phone number and Rubber Board registration of the grower.

The agencies should not purchase rubber from traders.

### Govt gives green signal for field trials of GM crops

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**'We have no business to halt ongoing research and development'** **New Delhi, February 27:** Reversing his predecessor Jayanti Natarajan's stance, M Veerappa Moily, Minister for Petroleum, Natural Gas and Environment, has approved the biotech regulator – Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)'s year-old decision to permit field trials of genetically modified crops such as rice, wheat and maize among others.





#### Expert panel

“We have no business to halt the ongoing research and development work,” Moily told reporters here on Thursday. “GEAC is an expert and statutory committee and the Ministry must not undermine it.” Natarajan had earlier decided to put on hold all approvals – including those granted by GEAC – citing ongoing public interest litigation in the Supreme Court

seeking a total ban, including on field trials, of GM crops.

#### To be displayed again

The minutes of the decisions taken by GEAC for granting approval on March 22 last year were removed from its website after they were uploaded and displayed for a few days. The minutes have been cleared and will now be put up again on the GEAC website, said P.V.Rajagopalan, Secretary, Environment Ministry.

The trials approved by GEAC include Bayer Bioscience’s GM rice for insect tolerance, Monsanto’s insect protection and weed management in maize, Mahyco and BASF India’s proposals on GM rice.

#### Castor, cotton

The GEAC had also approved the Directorate of Oilseeds Research’s proposal seeking extension of validity of trials in castor and Central Institute of Cotton Research’s proposal seeking extension of validity to event selection trials on transgenic cotton for bollworm resistance.

Emphasising that the Ministry’s decision is not in conflict with the Supreme Court’s views, Moily said the concerns of the court-appointed Technical Expert Committee on bio-safety and regulatory process had been taken into account.

A majority of the committee members had suggested that all trials of GM crops be suspended.

Moily said all field trials would be subject to GEAC approval and consent from the respective State. Six States, including Gujarat and Maharashtra, have given no-objection to field trials of GM crops. The Coalition for a GM Free India has slammed Moily’s move terming it as unscientific, anti-people and reeking of vested interests.

#### ‘Against citizens interest’

“The writing on the wall is clear now. The UPA government is against the interest of the citizens, our farmers and the welfare of the nation itself and is hand in glove with the multinational GM seed industry, which stands to gain immensely from the numerous open field trials of GM crops.

“Why else will they permit these field trials of risky GM crops which had been put on hold by the previous Environment Minister Jayanti Natarajan?” said Rajesh Krishnan, Convenor, Coalition for a GM-Free India.

## Business Standard

### Dairy sector upbeat on revenue growth in FY14

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The Gujarat Cooperative [Milk](#) Marketing Federation ([GCMMF](#)) is eyeing a 30 per cent rise in revenues in the current financial year, at Rs 18,000 crore, in FY14. Down south, [Hatsun](#) Agro Product Ltd, a major private dairy in Chennai, expects revenues to grow 17-18 per cent in FY14 from Rs 2,500 crore last year, while Maharashtra-based [Parag Milk](#) Foods estimates its revenues would grow 25 per cent from last year’s Rs 1,100 crore. In the north, Punjab-

based [Verka](#) Dairy, too, feels that with competitive rates, profitability is likely to improve by 10-12 per cent.

R S Sodhi, managing director of GCMMF, which sells milk and milk products under the [Amul](#) brand, said: “For the last five years, the compounded annual growth (in revenues) rate has been in the range of 20 per cent. The incremental growth this year will come from the price increase.” He added that for GCMMF, the profits are passed on to the producers or farmers, and on an average, farmers get 10-12 per cent more procurement price this year. GCMMF is paying an average procurement price Rs 500 a kg fat of milk to the farmers, which is up by about Rs 40 a kg fat compared to last year.

According to [dairy industry](#) insiders, while milk production has been up by around five per cent during the financial year (around 340 million litres a day), the demand has also risen commensurately, thereby avoiding building up of any surplus in the market. Add to this the export of skimmed milk powder ([SMP](#)) and India is expected to export in excess of 100,000 tonnes of SMP this year.

## THE MILKY WAY

### Year-wise turnover

Year	₹ crore	% change	
2005-06	3,774	29.16	
2006-07	4,278	13.35	
2007-08	5,255	22.84	
2008-09	6,711	27.71	
2009-10	8,005	19.28	
2010-11	9,774	22.10	
2011-12	11,668	19.38	
2012-13	13,735	17.72	

Source: Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation

Players such as Parag Milk Foods expect to more than double their turnover from exports to Rs 300 crore this financial year (from Rs 120 crore in FY13) mainly on the back of SMP and cheese exports. Sodhi, too, informed that GCMMF is exporting close to 8,000-10,000 tonnes of SMP in a month. Nandkishor Attal, chairman and managing director of Maharashtra-based Vaishno Devi Dairy Products claimed SMP prices have firmed up in the

international markets. “Prices at present are Rs 4,200-4,300 a tonne compared to Rs 3,000-3,100 a tonne around a year ago.”

Also, the demand for value-added products is on the rise, and margins are much higher in this segment. For example, while margins in liquid milk are around four per cent, in items such as curd, margins are way higher, around 20 per cent.

[Dairies](#) such as Parag Milk Foods and Verka are expecting margins to improve by 10-12 per cent. While R G Chandramogan, chairman and managing director of Hatsun Agro, did not wish to comment on the exact margins, he, nonetheless confirmed that margins are definitely going to increase this year. “With volumes increasing, together with optimisation of capacity utilisation, profitability will improve,” he said. Buoyed by the increased demand, Parag has raised production by 30 per cent. “We are now handling 1.4-1.6 million litres a day, which is around 30 per cent more than last year,” said Devendra Shah, chairman and managing director of Parag Milk Foods.

However, Chandramogan is of the view that production growth would moderate to 3.5 per cent in the next financial year.

# Hybrid seeds new growth area in agro-chemicals

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The agro-chemical industry seems to be putting more focus on breeding of [hybrid seeds](#), from developing of [pesticides](#), herbicides, weedicides, etc.

The diversion has slowed growth of the agro-chemical sector and multiplied the hybrid seed segment in India.

A study by [East India Securities](#), an equity research entity, estimates India's Rs 10,000-crore seed industry growth at 12-13 per cent annually, of which the commercial seed segment accounts for 25 per cent of the total market. The Rs 21,000-crore agro-chemical industry has seen slower growth in recent years.

"The basic objective for a change in the focus is to switch the basic genome, to bring in a new wave of genetically modified organisms. This has helped chemical companies to offset their decline in turnover from agro-chemicals, to compensate with an increase in the seeds business. Their vast research knowledge, technical pool and resources have helped the companies to bring revolutionary products in the seeds industry," said Santosh Nair, chief executive officer, CamsonBiotechnologies Ltd. In times to come, Camson feels the seeds business is going to get very competitive.

"There has been a shift in the business model from agro-chemicals to seed. As agro-chemicals are the last component that goes into a farmer's investment chain, it faces a lot of uncertainty. The largest advantage for selling seed is considerable pricing power to the company. Farmers have to buy new seeds every season," said Sageraj Baria, an analyst with East India Securities.

Developing a new molecule takes about 10 years and Rs 1,000 crore. The unorganised sector controls almost half the market share, meaning a high risk of fake products.

Observing the need, [Rallis India](#), a biotech company from Tata Group, acquired Metahelix, a seed research and marketing company, some years earlier. The aim was to capitalise on the seeds opportunity. The company's non-agro-chemical revenue rose to 11 per cent in 2013 from zero in 2009, it says; this is likely to further rise to 14 per cent by 2015.

"In a short span of time, Metahelix has smartly ramped up its market presence. This year itself, it has further registered an over-50 per cent growth, with profits. It has a leading presence in hybrid paddy, corn and millets. The introduction of biotech seeds does provide a solution against pests through the seeds route and leads to avoidance of use of chemicals, as had happened when Bt (genetically modified) cotton seeds were introduced. Over time, though, nature's phenomena leads to emergence of other pests. With its presence now in both agro-chemicals and seeds, the Rallis portfolio is balanced, to provide solutions to the farmers in either segment," said V Shankar, managing director, Rallis India.

Rallis has grown by 21 per cent in the first nine months of the current financial year.

Joerg Rehbein, head of Bayer CropScience, Indian Subcontinent, said: "We continue to broaden our hybrid seed portfolio in rice, cotton, vegetables and mustard, to address the challenges in agriculture and the growing demands of consumers. We are also developing agronomic traits to better manage diseases, insects and abiotic stress (e.g submergence and salinity tolerance for rice).

# India is largest shrimp exporter to US

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Last year, India was the largest exporter of shrimps to the US, a first. [Shrimp exports](#) to the US, which stood at 94,000 tonnes (about half India's overall shrimp exports), were valued at \$1 billion. India is now the eighth-largest exporter of food items to the US.

Speaking to Business Standard, AJ Thakaran, president of the Seafood Exporters Association of India, said Thailand, the previous largest shrimp exporter to the US, had recorded low production last year, owing to the outbreak of a disease called the Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS). Aquaculture production in Thailand fell about 50 per cent due to the outbreak of EMS.

Thakaran said globally, shrimp prices had increased substantially, adding further increase was unlikely. In India, raw material costs for shrimp exports had increased to Rs 600 a kg. "So, further rise in export prices might affect our business with the US. The consumer resistance is already strong in markets such as the US and Europe," he said.

Thakaran said the premium quality of Indian shrimps attracted importers in the US market. During her recent visit to India, Margaret Hamburg, the US Food and Drug Commissioner, said US authorities were largely happy with the quality of seafood India shipped to that country.

In a discussion with Thakaran, US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officials accompanying Hamburg said through the years, the Indian seafood sector made various efforts to comply with [US FDA](#) import requirements. "Our seafood exports to the US are being treated fairly by the FDA, and we have no major issues on the inspection procedures followed by FDA for seafood imports," Thakaran said.

He, however, told the US FDA delegation when consignments were sampled for inspection, it sometimes took up to 60 days for the results to be known and containers to be released. This caused substantial financial stress for both the exporter, as well as the US importer concerned.

Between 2005 and 2010, exports to US had been hit by the imposition of anti-dumping duty. Imposition of [countervailing duty](#) (CVD) worsened matters. Thakaran said though CVD had been done away with and anti-dumping duty was low, he was concerned about CVD, as an appeal had been filed in this regard against the decision of US [Department of Commerce](#).

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