

THE HINDU

TIRUVANNAMALAI,

Farmers told to set up solar pump sets at 80 p.c. subsidy

Farmers are asked to use a scheme under which they can set up solar pump sets with 80 per cent government subsidy.

District Collector A. Gnanasekaran, in a statement issued here on Wednesday said that Government of Tamil Nadu, with a motive to encourage and popularise solar energy, gives 80 per cent subsidy to farmers for setting up solar powered pump sets of 5 horse power capacity.

Design of the panels

The solar panels that come as part of these solar powered pump sets are so designed to move along the sun and ensure optimum use of sun light.

200 square meter of land, without tree and shadow, located within 10 m of the well/water source is required.

Cost

Cost of the pump set suitable for 6 inch bore well is Rs.4,39,950. Of this, 3,35,200 comes as government subsidy and farmer need to spend Rs.1,04,750. Cost of the pump set suitable for open well is Rs. 5,01,512. Of this, 3,84,000 is given as government subsidy and remaining Rs.1,17,512 is to be borne by the farmer.

Cost of mono bloc pump sets suitable for surface level water sources is Rs.5,24,650. Of this, Rs.3,99,872 comes as subsidy and remaining Rs.1,24,778 is to be borne by farmers.

Government approved companies will set up the solar powered pump sets and maintain them for five years.

To make use of the programme, farmers of Tiruvannamalai, Chengam, Thandampattu, Kalasapakkam and Polur taluks are asked to apply to Assistant Executive Engineer (Agriculture Engineering), 4/13, Pasuvannan Nagar, Kurinji Nagar, Vengikkal, Tiruvannamalai.

Farmers of Arani, Vandavasi and Cheyyar taluks have been asked to apply to the Assistant Executive Engineer (Agriculture Engineering), 67, Karthikeyan Road, Saidapet, Arani.

KARNATAKA

Mysore zoo to educate farmers on conservation, generating vermicompost

We will interact with them and make use of their suggestions: executive director

: The Mysore zoo is reaching out to farmers for the first in recent years as part of its conservation efforts, which it has been pursuing vigorously.

The zoo is taking the first step towards engaging farmers for spreading the message of conservation, doing their bit for expanding greenery and protecting birds, besides making the best use of waste generated in their backyards and converting biomass into manure for their fields.

The zoo has come forward to share its decade-long experience of producing vermicompost using animal, vegetable, kitchen and garbage waste, with farmers so that they too can replicate the model.

Accordingly, it is throwing open its doors to interested farmers on June 5 for a workshop on the production of vermicompost.

The zoo came up with the project of generating vermicompost in 2004 as a result of garbage generated on the zoo premises resulting in unhygienic conditions. Besides helping improve hygiene on the zoo's premises, it brought in additional revenue.

Executive director of the Zoo B.P. Ravi told *The Hindu* that the zoo produces vermicompost worth about Rs. 11 lakh a year. "It's a very successful model and has attracted demand from the public," he added.

He said the workshop would be an ideal platform for exchanging ideas. It's an endeavour for connecting with farmers, he added.

"We thought why not share our experience with farmers so that they could make use of waste generated in their backyards."

"Besides sharing our experiences related to conservation and environment protection, we will also interact with them and make use of their suggestions in our efforts," he said.

Mr. Ravi said resource persons and scientists from the Krishi Vigyana Kendra will interact with farmers during the programme. Officials from the Forest and Agriculture Departments will also be present at the workshop.

One of the issues that will be highlighted is prevention of burning green waste. “Green waste can be converted into manure. Burning green waste harms soil fertility,” Mr. Ravi said.

KARNATAKA

Farmers seek better facilities with jump in coconut cultivation



Farmers don't get technical support from the Horticulture Department to ensure better yield, according to Tippeswamy, a farmer in Chitradurga.

IN LEAPS AND BOUNDS	
YEAR	AREA UNDER CULTIVATION IN CHITRADURGA (ha)
2003-04	46,440
2006-07	49,218
2009-10	52,782
2010-11	54,268
2011-12	56,271
2012-13	57,554

Growers in Chitradurga say high transportation charges cut into profits

Though coconut is the second-largest horticulture crop in the State, occupying 31 per cent of the total area under horticulture cultivation, farmers, particularly in Chitradurga district, don't have adequate market facilities. The crop is mainly grown in 12 districts of

southern Karnataka. Each year, the area under cultivation is increasing by more than 1,000 hectares.

For example, in Chitradurga, coconut cultivation was spread across 46,440 hectares in 2003–04, and it increased to 49,218 hectares in 2006–07; 52,782 hectares in 2009–10; 54,268 hectares in 2010–11; 56,271 hectares in 2011–12; and 57,554 hectares in 2012–13, according to Horticulture Department officials.

The coconuts grown in the State are marketed to Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Because of the increasing demand, more farmers have started growing coconuts in Chitradurga.

Tippeswamy, a farmer from Hosadurga taluk, said though the area under coconut cultivation was increasing, farmers had to go all the way to Tiptur or Maddur to sell their produce, incurring hefty transportation charges. This, together with repaying of loans, cut into their profits. He said that if the State government provided proper market facilities, the growers could save on transportation charges. “The farmers don’t get technical support from the Horticulture Department to ensure better yield by protecting the trees from disease,” he added.

Coir production

On the other hand, department officials said manufacturing coir, a byproduct of coconut, could become an important cottage industry in rural areas. It could also provide employment to rural folk.

There are 330 units manufacturing coir products registered with the coir board, and they are located in Tumkur, Chitradurga, Bangalore, Hassan and Mandya. Of these units, 50 are fibre-extraction units, 30 make ropes and 30 produce yarn.

“The department had organised a workshop in the district to create awareness among the coconut growers on the importance of setting up a cottage industry. If any one evinces interest in setting up a unit, they can come out with a proposal and the same would be approved by the government and necessary infrastructure will be provided,” the officials said.

The State government opened purchase centres at Hosadurga taluk, said officials, and there were plans to open other centres in the district to help farmers.

KARNATAKA

Farmers lay siege to Deputy Commissioner's office

Farmers and agricultural labourers under the banner of the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sanga staged a demonstration in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office here on Wednesday opposing the displacement of poor farmers from bagair hukum land.

They were agitating against displacement from government lands which they have been cultivating for the past several years and demanding the title deeds of these lands.

B. Umesh , co-convenor of KPRS district unit, demanded that the government provide an opportunity to submit Form 53 to enable those living on and cultivating government land to legalize the property and aid the tillers. He urged the government to provide a minimum of 12 cents or 5 gunta of land to agricultural labourers to enable them to build a house. Other demands included a Rs.75.000-subsidy and a Rs.3 lakh interest-free loan for the landless cultivators.

KERALA

Kole farmers seek disbursal of procurement price without delay

Farmers vow to suspend cultivation if govt. holds up payment



The vast kole fields of Thrissur district.— PHOTO: K.C. Sowmish

The kole farmers in the district have sought payment of the procurement price for paddy without delay.

Kole Karshaka Sangam president K.K. Kochumohammed said that the authorities should be ready to pay the paddy price within one month of the procurement.

“Most of the time the farmers get their money after four months. Sometimes, even after it. We have taken a decision this time that farmers will not take up farming next time if the payment gets delayed indefinitely.”

“A kg of rice costs Rs. 30-39 in the market. There is great demand for rice. But the government is diverting this fund without paying us the procurement price,” the farmers complained.

The kole farmers urged the government to increase the procurement price of paddy from Rs 19 to Rs. 25.

“Considering the increasing the cost of farming, the government should increase the procurement price. The prices of fertilizers and pesticides are skyrocketing. The shortage of farm workers is another hurdle,” Mr. Kochumohammed noted.

The Ponnani-Thrissur kole fields, which have been recognised as a Ramsar site, produces 1.5 lakh tonnes of paddy worth Rs. 250 crore every year. The kole farmers alleged that the budgetary allocation for cleaning the choked irrigation canals was far too insufficient. Most of the canals are clogged with weeds and dumped waste. Temporary dams have to be built to regulate the entry of salt water.

The kole farmers recently gheraoed the paddy officer when payment of Rs. 60 crore, the procurement price for paddy, was delayed indefinitely.

Finally, the protest was withdrawn after the authorities promised to pay Rs. 10 crore immediately after the intervention of District Collector M.S. Jaya.

Meanwhile, a National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) assisted project for developing infrastructure in the kole fields is progressing in the district.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Farmers hail official's appointment

Farmers in Adilabad are expecting positive changes in agriculture policy and practices in Telangana State, especially with regard to supply of soyabean seed, following appointment of Poonam Malakondaiah as Principal Secretary, Agriculture.

They recalled the IAS officer's efforts as Agriculture Commissioner in 2006 in getting Bt cotton seed companies to reduce the price of their product by more than 50 per cent.

“We now expect her to address the soyabean seed supply issue in a similar manner. Due to malpractices by the concerned the seed is now being sold at Rs.7,800 per quintal which

is Rs. 3,000 in excess of last year's price," pointed out a senior farmer leader from TRS, B. Goverdhan Reddy.

"The enhancement of the market price means an additional burden of Rs.27 crore on soyabean farmers in the district. We also hope that the Principal Secretary will enhance the subsidy on soyabean seed from 30 per cent to 50 per cent and organise sale only on subsidised value," he added.

"Poonam Malakondaiah's appointment as Principal Secretary in Agriculture Department will definitely herald changes. We are sure she will also look into other pressing issues and problems faced by farmers not only in Adilabad, but everywhere in Telangana State," observed farmer Thatipalli Gangadhar Raju of Kamatwada in Tamsi mandal.

"She should start off by linking agriculture with Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). This will ensure the farming sector does not suffer from labour shortage problem," suggests Katipalli Srinivas Reddy, another cotton farmer from Talamadugu mandal head quarter village.

Labour shortage has dogged the farming sector since the MGNREGS was introduced. Farmers in Adilabad say, the government can take care of this issue if it pays 50 per cent of the farm work wages to the wage-seekers, while the remaining will be paid by the farmer concerned.

ANDHRA PRADESH

Diversion of water a cause of concern for farmers

PROBLEMS THEY FACE		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ryots in tail-end areas hit hard by obstruction to the flow of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeds surface repeatedly in Jafar Saheb and Sarvepalli canals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some aqua culture firms are also tapping water from these canals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water in the canals is also being diverted for prawn culture 		

Obstruction to the free flow of water is a major cause of concern for farmers located under various irrigation canals in the Penna delta area. The problem is more intense for farmers located in tail-end areas.

The weed problem comes up repeatedly in the Jafar Saheb and Sarvepalli canals where water hyacinth grows unchecked at different locations. Coupled with weeds, the domestic sewage left in the canals also pose a serious risk of obstruction to the flow.

Following these problems, the district administration has put the Irrigation Department staff on alert and asked them to identify locations where the problem has to be addressed immediately.

There is also demand from the farmers' community to solve the problem and prepare the canals for the next season.

With farmers raising these concerns, District Collector N. Srikanth accompanied by irrigation officials visited Alleepuram, South Amuluru and Narayanareddypeta. He enquired from local farmers about their problems.

Some of the farmers raised the issue of water in the canals being diverted for prawn culture.

They wanted immediate steps to discourage aqua culture firms to tap water from the canals.

Regarding the weed problem, the officials were asked to coordinate with the respective farmers' bodies and initiate measures for weed removal with immediate effect. This is seen as crucial for addressing the concerns of tail-end areas where farmers repeatedly complain about poor flow of water.

Preventing damping off in onion

Damping off is a major threat to raising healthy onion seedlings during Khariff season in all onion growing areas of the country. Generally 20-25 per cent onion seedlings get damaged due to this disease especially in nursery.

It is caused by soil borne fungal pathogens. Heavy summer showers cause huge mortality in the crop. Integrated approach is an effective and sustainable tool for the management of damping off disease in onion nursery.

Farmers are advised to grow Agrifound Dark Red, Arka Kalyan, N-53, Baswant-780, Bheema Raj and Bheema Red for north Indian regions and Agrifound Red, Co-1, Co-2, Co-3, Co-4 and Co-On-5 are suitable for Southern areas.

Integrated methods

Raised beds should be prepared for raising onion nursery (15-20 cm above at the soil surface) during Kharif.

Soil solarization by covering the nursery beds with transparent polythene for 25-30 days during May and June months is effective to prevent this infestation spread.

Soil treatment with fungal bio-agents like *Trichoderma viride*/*T.harzianum* at 5 kg/ha mixed with of well rotten FYM or vermicompost in nursery bed is advised.

Application of vermicompost at 2.0 tonnes/ha in nursery beds. Seed treatment with fungal bio-agent *T. viride* at 5g/kg seed or Thiram at 2.5g/kg seed is advised.

Use 8-10 kg seed to raise nursery for planting in one hectare area is sufficient.

The treated seeds should be sown by broadcasting method or in lines at a distance of 7-10 cm on the raised beds.

Avoid sowing of thick seed in nursery beds. Use the shade net to protect the nursery from heavy rains.

Irrigation should be done at regular intervals to maintain the optimum moisture in nursery beds.

When symptoms of damping off disease are visible, the drenching should be done immediately with Bavistin at 0.1 per cent or Thiram at 0.25 per cent in onion nursery to control the damping off.

(Dr. R. K. Singh, Assistant Director, Horticulture, NHRDF, Nashik, email: singhrknbpgr@yahoo.com, Mob:09881303443 and Dr. R. C. Gupta, Assistant Director (Plant Pathology), Mob:09422497764, Chitegaon Phata, Post-Darnasangvi, Taluka-Niphad, Nashik (Maharashtra) 422 003.)

TAMIL NADU

'Bring paddy from Chhattisgarh for hulling '

Tamil Nadu PDS Rice Hullers Federation on Wednesday demanded the Government to take measures to bring the excess paddy from Chhattisgarh to save the mills and the work force in this sector.

According the members, the production and procurement of paddy has drastically come down due to insufficient rain during the 2013-14. The stock of paddy procured by the Government's procurement centres for hulling is only for two months. This can affect employment and livelihood of 45,000 direct workers and over one lakh indirect workers in this sector, said the members.

A statement issued by the Federation said that the harvest of Kuruvai crop is yet to begin and the availability of paddy for hulling in Government's procurement centres is minimal. Hence the future of hulling mills and the employees depending on it is bleak for another nine months.

A committee headed by the State Food Secretary had visited that Chhattisgarh and confirmed their willingness to supply paddy.

The paddy hulled from the Government-licensed rice mills could be used for distribution under the free rice scheme, which is being implemented through Public Distribution System.

The Federation also demanded the Government to increase the hulling charges to Rs. 36 per quintal for boiled rice and Rs. 30 for raw rice (In Chhattisgarh it is Rs. 40 per quintal).

The office-bearers of the Federation met the State Food Minister and submitted a petition recently. The Federation was inaugurated recently at a meeting held in Green Pearls Estate in Yercaud in Salem.

The meeting was presided over by its state president PTR C. Ramakrishnan.

TAMIL NADU

2.5 tonnes of ration rice seized

Fying squad officials seized 2.5 tonnes of ration rice as it was being smuggled on Tuesday night.

Following information on smuggling of rice meant for Public Distribution System from Nagercoil to Thiruvananthapuram, flying squad tahsildar Kannan and team members Syed Ali and John Bright intensified vehicle check at Thukkalay.

When they intercepted a speeding van, the driver refused to stop the vehicle, which was detained after a hot chase for about 5 km. As the driver and the cleaner escaped, the officials checked the van, from which 2.5 tonnes of ration rice packed in 50 bags was seized.

The van was impounded.

KERALA

MALAPPURAM,

Sapling exchange, mango expo at schools to mark Environment Day

World Environment Day would be celebrated across the district on Thursday.

While the district administration will, along with local bodies, plant mangroves at Mangattiri in Vettom panchayat, schools across the district will celebrate the day in different ways.

AMUP School, Munduparamba, has asked all its children to bring one sapling of a fruit-bearing tree to mark the occasion. Wearing special badges, the children will exchange their saplings with one another. They will also plant many of them on the campus and in the school neighbourhood. The school has chalked out a week-long awareness programme also.

AUP School, Uphill, Malappuram, will prepare wall newspapers and albums to create awareness of environment protection. Islahiya Public School, Kottakkal, has chalked out programmes such as planting of trees and several competitions for students. The children of ALP School, Elambulassery, has decorated a gooseberry tree on the campus to celebrate Environment Day. Under the banner of the Environment Club, the children dressed up the tree up like a woman and wrote slogans. They will take an oath to protect nature. A painting competition will also be held. AMUP School at Edakkulam has tied up with an environment group named Re-Echo to conduct a month-long programme to conserve indigenous mangoes. They will conduct an exhibition of mangoes available in the rural areas of Malappuram.

RAMANATHAPURAM,

New technology to boost vegetable cultivation

Subsidy available to establish poly green houses



The Department of Horticulture has introduced poly green house technology for vegetable cultivation to wean away farmers from seasonal and conventional cultivation method and take up cultivation of high yielding vegetables throughout the year.

The technology, which helps farmers to cultivate vegetables in a controlled weather condition and in protective environment, has been widely practiced in higher elevation areas like the Nilgiris, Kodaikanal and Hosur and introduced in this district for the first time. The farmers who had been cultivating vegetables using groundwater and other

sources during a particular season in a year, could cultivate high yielding varieties round the year and increase production by four to five times if they switched over to the new technology, V. Gangadharan, Deputy Director of Horticulture said, on Wednesday.

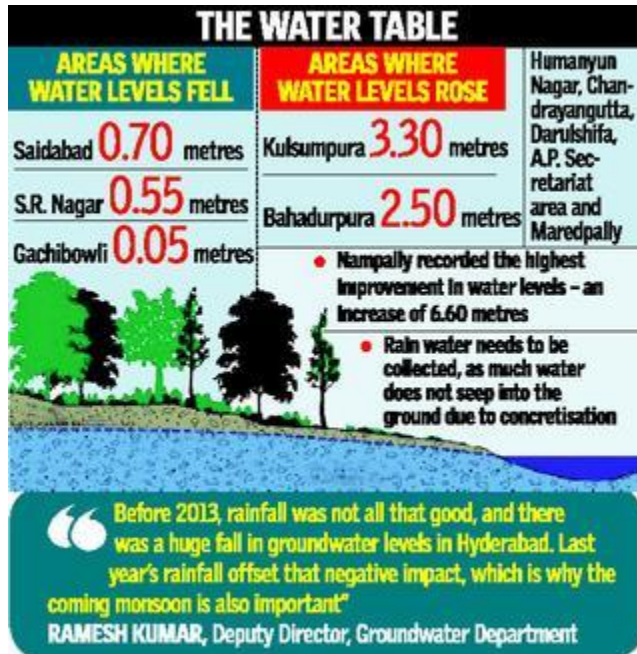
He said high yielding vegetables such as cucumber and capsicum could be cultivated in the green poly house as it had facilities to control the temperature. The technology would be ideal for high yielding cucumber and the crop could be cultivated thrice a year.

“If a farmer sets up a 1,000 square metre green poly house at a cost of Rs. 10 lakhs, he can cultivate 40 to 45 tonnes of cucumber a year and earn Rs. 9 lakhs,” he said adding the new technology would be introduced this year on about 4,000 sq. metre on an experimental basis involving five or six farmers. At present, farmers were cultivating brinjal, ladies finger, tomato and cluster beans on about 600 hectares and they harvested 25 tonnes of vegetables per hectare, Mr. Gangadharan said.

Meanwhile, a press release said that farmers who wished to establish the green poly houses would be given 50 per cent subsidy under the Integrated Horticulture Development Scheme. A farmer could get the subsidy for a maximum of 40,000 sq. ft. At the rate of Rs. 4.65 lakhs per 10,000 sq. ft., an entrepreneur could get maximum subsidy of Rs. 18 lakh. Interested farmers could contact the officials in Ramanathapuram on phone number - 04567-230328.

Rise in city’s groundwater levels

Groundwater levels rose by 1.45 metres on an average



Groundwater levels have marginally increased this year – by 1.45 metres on an average – when compared to last year.

A comparison of the water level below the surface for the month of April this year showed that except for a few places, there was an improvement in the situation when compared to data from the same month in 2013.

Sanjeeva Reddy Nagar, Gachibowli and Saidabad were the only areas where the levels decreased – marginally, by 0.55 metres, 0.05 metres and 0.70 metres respectively. Among the 11 places from where readings were recorded, Nampally recorded the highest improvement in water levels – an increase of 6.60 metres.

Other areas where groundwater levels rose more than the average were Kulsumpura and Bahadurpura, where the situation improved by 3.30 metres and 2.50 metres. Humanyun Nagar, Chandrayangutta, Darulshifa, A.P. Secretariat area, and Maredpally also recorded an increase in water levels.

Even areas on the outskirts like Ghatkesar, Hayatnagar, Ibrahimpatnam, Saroornagar, Malkajgiri, Shamshabad and Rajendarnagar witnessed a rise in groundwater levels.

“The situation is good due to the excess rainfall last year. If the monsoons are good this time too, the situation will improve,” said Ramesh Kumar, Deputy Director, Groundwater Department.

Mr. Kumar said the current situation has only levelled the negative impact of years with less rainfall.

“Before 2013 rainfall was not that good, and there was a huge decrease in groundwater levels in Hyderabad. Last year’s rainfall offset that negative impact, which is why the coming monsoon is also important for the city,” he explained.

Harvest rain water

He also mentioned that rain water in the city needs to be collected, as much of the water received in the monsoons do not seep into the ground due to concretisation.

SALEM/KRISHNAGIRI,

Rains push up flow into Mettur dam



Rains in catchments have pushed up water flow into the Stanley Reservoir at Mettur from 3,800 cusecs (cubic feet per second) on Tuesday to 5,477 cusecs on Wednesday morning.

Billigundlu in Krishnagiri, where the Cauvery enters Tamil Nadu before flowing into the dam, recorded 5,000 cusecs at 8 a.m.

Tourists had a good time at Hogennakal as the falls presented a pleasant sight.

PWD officials at Mettur said the water level in the dam went up from 40.48 feet to 41.28 feet, against the Full Reservoir Level of 120 feet. The storage improved from 12,339 thousand million cubic feet (tmcft) to 12,759 tmcft on Wednesday, against the dam's capacity of 93.470 tmcft. The outflow was 500 cusecs, meant for drinking water supply.

During the same period last year, officials said, the level was 18.89 feet and the storage was 3.78 tmcft.

The water level in the dam has gone up from 40.48 feet to 41.28 feet

WATER LEVEL

Mettur

The water level in the Mettur dam stood at 41.53 feet on Wednesday against its full level of 120 feet.

The inflow was 5,552 cusecs and the discharge, 500 cusecs.

— Special Correspondent

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Thursday, Jun 5

Max Min

Partly Cloudy

36° | 28°

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 75

Sunset: 06:33

Wind: normal

Barometer: 1003

Tomorrow's Forecast



Friday, Jun 6

Max Min

Cloudy

37° | 27°

Extended Forecast for a week

Saturday

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Jun 7

Jun 8

Jun 9

Jun 10

Jun 11



38° | 28°

35° | 30°

36° | 30°

37° | 31°

37° | 31°

Partly Cloudy Partly Cloudy

Partly Cloudy

Sunny Partly Cloudy

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Sunrise: 05:23

Humidity: 34 Sunset: 07:16

Wind: normal Barometer: 1001



Jaitley to meet agriculturists today

Finance Minister Arun Jaitley will on Thursday begin pre-Budget consultations with various stakeholders of the economy. First off the blocks will be consultations with representatives of the agriculture sector. Currently, agriculture accounts for 14 per cent of the gross domestic product and 11 per cent of India's total exports. On Thursday evening, Jaitley will also meet social sector groups to elicit their views on the upcoming budget. He is slated to meet representatives of apex industry chambers on Friday.

Kerala farmers eye gains thru mangosteen cultivation

Fetch Rs. 100-120/kg for the exotic tropical fruit



Packed with medicines Research has proved the effectiveness of mangosteen in fighting cancer.

Increasing demand, following reports of health benefits and good prices they fetch, has encouraged several farmers in Kerala to take up mangosteen cultivation.

A number of growers in Pathanamthitta, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Kottayam districts, have planted the saplings of the 'Queen of the fruit.'

Gestation period

Joshua Daniel, a planter and trader of mangosteen based in Konni in Pathanamthitta district, told *Business Line* that he has planted 1,200 three-year-old saplings which would start yielding after 5 years. Thus, the total gestation period is eight years and will continue to yield for over a century, he said.

According to Daniel, the Eraviperoor area in Pathanamthitta produces an estimated 500 tonnes of mangosteen, followed by Kozhencherry, Konni, Kottayam, and Pariyaram in Chalakkudy. As supply has picked up, prices are currently in the range of Rs. 100-120 a kg.

The harvested fruits are transported mainly to the Koyambedu market in Chennai and to Bangalore and Hyderabad. There are also traders based in Erattupettai who supply the fruit to other metros such as Mumbai, market sources said. “We have 15 fruit-bearing trees and traders come and offer prices on fruits per tree basis. We have given them all for Rs. 1.25 lakh,” Thomas P Thomas, a botanist and grower in Kozhencherry said. It is harvested in March to August in Kerala, he said.

Mangosteen is native to South-East Asia and requires a warm, very humid and equatorial climate to grow. It is found in tropical countries in Asia such as Thailand, India, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines.

It also grows reasonably well in areas such as Hawaii and tropical Northern Australia, said Thomas. Therefore, mangosteen is grown in the banks of Pampa, Manimala, Meenachil and Periyar rivers in Kerala’s southern districts as the sandy soil contains good moisture content.

Mangosteen fruit contains anti-oxidant, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties. Scientific research has proved its effectiveness against breast cancer, liver cancer and leukemia.

In addition, Mangosteen also exhibits anti-histamine and anti-inflammatory properties.

Jasmine price plunges to Rs. 30/kg

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Jasmine is losing its fragrance with prices plunging to a record low in Tamil Nadu’s Erode district.

Sathyamangalam is known for jasmine cultivation and sales. The flower is cultivated in over 25,000 acres in Kothamangalam, Pudubeerkadavu, Sikkarasampalayam, Rajannagar, Vadavalli, and also in about 20 villages.

Farmers have been taking risks to grow the plant; even during the severe summer, farmers tried their best to save the crop by paying huge sums for water.

They were able to get more than 10 tonnes of jasmine but could sell for Rs. 200-400 a kg, with buyers from Karnataka and Kerala purchasing the flower for exports to the UAE.

A couple of days ago, farmers harvested 30 tonnes of jasmine and sold 15 tonnes to factories producing perfume in Mettupalayam and other places for a lower price.

The remaining 15 tonnes were brought to the Sathyamangalam flower market and was sold at a public auction.

Trend to continue

SK Muthuswamy, President of the market, said jasmine was sold on Monday at Rs. 40 a kg and all 15 tonnes were sold.

On Wednesday, the flower fetched Rs. 30 only, a record low. All the 20 tonnes on offer were sold. He said the trend is likely to continue for another ten days as the production could rise to over 35 tonnes and at least 25 tonnes will arrive in the market.

He said jasmine fetched Rs. 1,200 a few months ago and sales were encouraging. But now even with marriage season starting, prices are still low. Mullai, another fragrance flower, also sells at a low price.

On Wednesday morning, it was sold at Rs. 20 a kg and subsequently fell to Rs. 15. Growers have urged the Government to procure jasmine during the flood season for a nominal price, and to set up a perfume manufacturing factory near Sathyamangalam.

Refineries cut palmolein, soya oil prices

REFINERIES CUT OIL PRICES

The sentiment in the edible oils market improved on Wednesday after a sharp bounce back in the futures market towards the end of the day. In the Bombay Commodity Exchange, most edible oils registered a drop of Rs. 2-5 for 10 kg, as local refineries reduced their rates for palmolein and soya oil, tracking the overnight bearish trend in the overseas markets. During the day, Liberty and Ruchi together sold about 2,800-3,000 tonnes of palmolein at Rs. 553-555. Ruchi also sold 250-300 tonnes of soyabean refined oil at Rs. 630. Our Correspondent

Poultry-feed prices dip on lower input costs

POULTRY-FEED PRICES DIP

Prices of a few poultry-feed products fell by Rs. 10-25 for a 50-kg bag on Wednesday due to the continuous fall in cost of production in the last few days. Lower input costs pulled poultry feed prices down, said Aditya Mishra, a commodity expert. Feed prices may continue to rule around the current levels without any fluctuation in the coming days, he added. In the physical market, soyameal eased by Rs. 1,500 to Rs. 41,700 a

tonne, while Bajra fell by Rs. 150 to Rs. 13,850 a tonne. Maize eased by Rs. 40 to Rs. 1,360 a quintal. Rice bran oil dropped by Rs. 2 to Rs. 54 a kg; DCP was down by 20 paise to Rs. 32.60; MBM fell by Rs. 1 to Rs. 47.50; DRB went down by Rs. 550 to Rs. 9,100; while mustard de-oiled cake dropped by Rs. 500 to Rs. 15,100 a tonne. Our Correspondent

Outlook turns bearish for tur

Pulse seeds and pulses were mixed with tur and urad declining on weak buying support. Moong witnessed an uptrend on improved buying support at lower rates. Chana, on the other hand, ruled stable on subdued demand.

Tur has been witnessing a downtrend in Indore *mandis* with arrivals outstripping demand. On Wednesday, tur (Maharashtra) ruled at Rs. 4,200-4,250 a quintal, while tur (Madhya Pradesh) was quoted at Rs. 3,700-3,800. Compared with last week, tur is down Rs. 100, while in the last fortnight, prices have declined by Rs. 200-250.

Given the rise in arrival of new tur and cheap imported tur, prospects for tur are bleak in the coming days, a trader told *Business Line*.

Turmeric falls on poor demand

Spot turmeric price decreased by Rs. 100 a quintal due to poor quality of arrivals and slack upcountry demand.

“Only poor quality turmeric arrived for sale, so sales were low with only 45 per cent of the stocks being sold. The low sale was also due to poor upcountry demand. Traders have not received local orders also,” said RKV Ravishankar, President, Erode Turmeric Merchants Association.

Some 340 bags of hybrid finger turmeric arrived and prices fell by Rs. 200 a quintal. Other varieties also decreased by Rs. 100 a quintal.

At the Erode Turmeric Merchants Association sales yard, the finger turmeric fetched Rs. 4,557-6,295 a quintal and root variety Rs. 4,014-5,914.

Lower inflow, export enquiries boost castorseed

LOWER INFLOW BOOSTS CASTORSEED

Castorseed price moved up in the spot market on the back of lower arrivals and hopes of higher export demand. With this, prices in the futures market also improved marginally on speculative buying at the lower level. According to a broker, demand in spot is likely to improve in the coming days as arrivals have dropped in the last one week. About 58,000-60,000 bags of castorseed arrived in Gujarat and prices increased by Rs. 10 to Rs. 755-765 for a *maund* of 20 kg. In Saurashtra, about 4,800-5,000 bags arrived and prices gained by Rs. 5 at Rs. 740-750 a *maund*. Our Correspondent

Mechanisation to revive saline farming Pokkali

Efforts to revive Kerala's Pokkali farming seems to be gaining ground with the launch of machines to prepare the land.

The Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Ernakulam) of the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute has introduced the machinery suitable for pokkali wetlands at Edavanakkad near here.

According to Shinoj Subramanian, Programme Coordinator, mechanisation of Pokkali fields is the need for the hour, as this unique saline rice farming in the coastal areas of Kerala is on the verge of extinction with a considerable reduction in cultivation.

KVK, which introduced the machine to a group of farmers, plans to train 15 women from each block panchayat where pokkali farming is practised and develop them into a mechanised Pokkali taskforce under the Kudumbashree programme, he said.

The operation cost of this garden tiller/mini tiller machine is Rs. 2,500 compared with Rs. 12,000 for a manual labourer. Moreover, it can make up for labour shortage as most of the skilled labourers are above 50 years of age, he said.

The Kendra has conducted extensive studies before launching the machine. KVK received funding from Mahila Kisan Sabha Pariyojana through the Kudumbashree Mission. The development of a harvesting machine for pokkali is also under the active consideration of KVK, he said.

Pepper loses sting as imports flood N. India

PEPPER FALLS AS IMPORTS FLOOD N. INDIA

Spot pepper prices fell on Wednesday on slack demand due to the availability of imported pepper in upcountry markets. No activities took place on the national and regional exchanges. North Indian markets are flooded with imported material sold at Rs. 675 a kg on 30 days credit, market sources told *Business Line*. Karnataka sellers were offering the commodity at Rs. 675 a kg on a cash-and-carry basis. But there were no buyers as the material was available on credit at the same rate, they said. Our Correspondent

Mixed trend in spot rubber

Physical rubber prices were mixed on Wednesday. According to sources, tyre companies kept on the sidelines as they were comfortable with imports.

Major counters remained unchanged on supply concerns while ISNR 20 and RSS 5 lost ground on buyer resistance. Volumes were dull.

Sheet rubber closed steady at Rs. 145 a kg, according to traders and the Rubber Board. The grade was unchanged at Rs. 142, according to dealers.

June futures ended at Rs. 144 (Rs. 144.07), July at Rs. 143.49 (Rs. 142.95), August at Rs. 141 (Rs. 141.05), September at Rs. 139.41 (Rs. 139.76) and October at Rs. 141.90 (Rs. 140.89) on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) dropped to Rs. 119.06 (Rs. 119.35) at Bangkok. June futures closed at ¥183.6 (Rs. 106.12) on the Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

Spot rubber rates (Rs. /kg) were: RSS-4: 145 (145); RSS-5: 142 (143); Ungraded: 137 (137); ISNR 20: 134 (135.50) and Latex 60%: 120 (120).

Stockists keep away as producers continue selling sugar

STOCKISTS KEEP AWAY FROM SUGAR

Sugar prices ruled steady on the Vashi wholesale market on Wednesday on the back of ample supply and limited local demand. In the physical market, S-grade declined by Rs. 6 a quintal at the lower end and increased by Rs. 4 at the higher end. As producers continued selling keeping tender offers open, stockists kept away from fresh bulk bet. Upcountry demand is lacking for long. Arrivals at the Vashi market declined to 55-56 truckloads and local off take were 53-54 loads. On Tuesday evening, 15-16 mills managed to sell 38,000-40,000 bags at Rs. 2,860-2,970 (Rs. 2,860-2,970) for S-grade and Rs. 2,970-3,100 (Rs. 2,970-3,100) for M-grade. Our Correspondent

Business Standard

UP heat on sugar mills over arrears



Last year, the UP government had retained the state advised price for cane at Rs 280/ql. The mills had been allowed to pay Rs 260/ql upfront and the remaining Rs 20/ql later

After the Allahabad High Court rap over massive arrears on payments to farmers for sugarcane sales of about Rs 8,500 crore, the [Uttar Pradesh](#) government has turned the heat on private [sugar mills](#). The government has started the process of registering First Information Reports (FIR) and issuing Recovery Certificates (RCs) against defaulting mills.

UP cane commissioner Subhash Chandra Sharma told Business Standard 36 FIRs had been lodged and 13 RCs issued against defaulting units. An RC empowers the district administration to seize assets for recovery. The actual action depends upon the amount to be recovered.

“I have convened a meeting of all mills in the private and cooperative sector tomorrow to discuss the payment issue,” he said, adding that mills were “cooperating” and had assured about settling the payment.

On Saturday, a bench of the court had pulled up the state dispensation for failing to ensuring payment of cane dues. It directed the government for settlement of arrears and the filing of an affidavit by the cane commissioner in July to this effect. The commissioner would be held responsible if arrears were not settled by then, the court had said. The petition was filed by Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan.

A delegation of cane societies met Sharma here on Wednesday to seek prompt payment of dues. These societies act as interfaces between mills and farmers. Last year, the UP government had retained a State Advised Price for cane at Rs 280/quintal. The mills had been allowed to pay Rs 260/qtl upfront and the remaining Rs 20/qtl later.

During the 2013-14 crushing season, UP’s sugar output dropped 13 per cent to 6.42 million tonnes. In 2011-12 and 2012-13, this was 6.97 mt and 7.4 mt, respectively.

Last year, Indian Sugar Mills Association had projected a [sugar production](#) of 6.6 mt in UP for the current season.

Coffee exports may decline 10% in FY15



[Coffee exports](#) are set to fall about 10 per cent this year, as international prices have seen a decline in the past few days and the rupee has appreciated against the dollar.

In April and May, coffee prices remained volatile. In April, at 170.58 cents/pound, the International Coffee Organization’s composite indicator recorded its highest monthly average in about two years. It however, declined 3.9 per cent in May to settle at 163.94 cents/pound. While continued uncertainty about the crop in [Brazil](#) had initially raised prices, recent reports stating the losses of growers in Brazil would be lower than estimated resulted in a fall in prices.

“The crop in Brazil is not as bad as expected earlier. According to Conab, the Brazilian

crop-forecasting agency, the damage is not going to be severe. Currently, the country is harvesting its 2014 crop,” said Nishant R Gurjer, former chairman of Karnataka Planters’ Association.

According to the Coffee Board, [ICE arabica coffee futures](#) sank amid volatile trade on Monday, as technical weakness and uncertainty over the extent of damage to the crop in Brazil led to selling by speculators and producers. Benchmark July arabica coffee futures dropped 5.15 cents, or 2.9 per cent, to close at \$1.7235/pound, below its 100-day moving average of \$1.7408. LIFFE July robusta coffee futures fell \$4, or 0.2 per cent, to settle at \$1,933 a tonne.

“As a result of the price drop, we expect shipments from India to slow after the monsoon. This year, exports could be lower by 15,000-20,000 tonnes, or 10 per cent. Farm-gate prices in Karnataka have already fallen 10-20 per cent in the case of arabica and about 10 per cent for robusta,” said Ramesh Rajah, president, Coffee Exporters’ Association of India.

Chana strengthens 0.50% on tight supply



[Chana](#) prices rose 0.50 per cent to Rs 2,842 per quintal in futures trade today as speculators enlarged positions on rising demand in the spot market.

Tight supplies from producing regions further fuelled the uptrend in chana prices.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, chana for delivery in July advanced by Rs 14, or 0.50 per cent, to Rs 2,842 per quintal with an open interest of 77,250 lots.

The July contract gained Rs 12, or 0.41 per cent, to Rs 2,906 per quintal in 1,14,410 lots.

Analysts said speculators enlarged positions on the back of an upsurge in demand in the spot market which kept chana prices higher for the second day at futures trade.

Refined soya oil advances 0.8% on strong demand

[Refined soya oil](#) prices advanced by 0.80 per cent to Rs 654.05 per 10 kg in futures trading today as speculators enlarged positions on strong demand in the spot market.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, refined soya oil for delivery in July added Rs 5.20, or 0.80 per cent, to Rs 654.05 per 10 kg with an open interest of 1,82,530 lots.

The June contract gained Rs 5.10, or 0.77 per cent, to Rs 668.40 per 10 kg in 68,310 lots.

Analysts said the rise in refined soya oil prices at futures trade was supported by strong demand in the spot market.

Cardamom down 1.72% on profit-booking



[Cardamom](#) prices fell 1.72 per cent to Rs 919 per kg in futures trading today as speculators booked profits at prevailing levels amid sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate supplies.

At the Multi Commodity Exchange, cardamom for delivery in June fell by Rs 16.10, or 1.72 per cent, to Rs 919 per kg in a business turnover of 166 lots.

The July contract shed Rs 4.80, or 0.53 per cent, to Rs 909 per kg in 104 lots.

Market analysts said besides profit-taking by speculators, sluggish demand in the spot market against adequate stocks position, mainly led to decline in cardamom prices at futures trade.

Govt must improve supply, storage of crops to counter El Nino: Assocham

Industry body Assocham has asked the government to take measures to improve supply and storage facilities for the country's crop produce, in view of the likelihood of deficit rainfall due to the El Nino effect.

"We recommend the government to immediately announce steps to control food inflation in view of the impending El Nino and the cascading negative affect it will have on crop production," Assocham president Rana Kapoor said.

"The government needs to make some key announcements on supply side management, logistic management, including warehousing, and implement changes in the Agriculture Produce Market Committee Act to curb hoarding," he added.

After four years of normal and above-normal monsoon, India is expected to have below normal monsoon this year with rainfall projected to be 95%, a news which is disappointing for the farming community.

About 60% of net sown area of the country is rain-fed. The deficit rainfall of 5% due to El Nino factor will cause loss to the GDP of about 1.75%, i.e. R1.80 lakh crore, which in turn will hurt lakhs of unskilled jobs, according to Assocham.

With every 1% deficit in rains, the country's GDP falls by 0.35%, it added.

Officials in the weather department earlier said the monsoon is expected to be below normal because of El-Nino effect, which is generally associated with the warming of ocean water.

The outlook for agriculture is clouded by the meteorological department's forecasts of a delay in the onset of the south-west monsoon with a 60% chance of the occurrence of El Nino," RBI governor Raghuram G Rajan said in a second bi-monthly monetary policy statement on Tuesday.

Maharashtra sugar mills await clarity over export subsidy on raw sugar

Sugar mills in Maharashtra have completed contracts for export of raw sugar to the tune of 61 lakh quintals this season. They had signed contracts for 66 lakh tonne of raw sugar, senior officials from Maharashtra State Cooperative Factories Federation (MSCFF) said.

Since the contracts have already been signed, a large quantum of exports had to be honoured in the absence of clarity on the export subsidy, Sanjeev Babar, MD, MSCFF said. There has been uncertainty regarding this issue, he said. "The federation has been seeking clarity on the issue of export subsidy and wanted the notification on the subsidy with retrospective effect in order to avoid losses to mills," he added.

Letters have been sent to the new ministry and we now await measures from the new government, he said.

Senior industry officials said that withdrawing the incentives at this stage would be wrong. Currently, the ex-factory sugar sale price in Maharashtra stands at R28-29 a kg, while the cost of production is R31-32.

The UPA government had announced export subsidy of R3,300 a tonne on raw sugar to help the industry export excess stock and clear dues. The subsidy was for February and March. For April and May, the government had reduced it to R2, 277 a tonne, owing to change in dollar-rupee exchange rates.

According to Indian Sugar Mills Association, although exports have surged this year, a 31% cut in subsidy for raw sugar production for April and May from R3,300 per tonne offered in February and March has slowed the pace of exports.

They say the subsidy quantum for April and May should have been around R3,800 per tonne, factoring in the appreciation of the rupee, and not R2,277 per tonne, as decided by the food department. Maharashtra, the largest producer, has produced around 7.70 million tonne until May 15 this year, the same as the previous year.

Arrears to cane farmers across the country have mounted to about R10,000 crore from about R3,000 crore at the start of the current marketing year in October 2013. In December, the centre had approved a R6,600 crore interest-free loan to the sugar industry to help make payments to sugarcane farmers.

DECCAN Chronicle

Telangana government may set conditions on farmer loan waivers

In what could be a blow to lakhs of farmers who have pinned their hopes on the farm loan waiver scheme, the TRS government is all set to impose tight regulations for availing the benefit.

“Farm loan waiver of up to Rs 1 lakh to all farmers,” was one of the main poll promises made by TRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao the recent polls.

However, the huge financial implications involved in the scheme are now forcing the TRS government to do a rethink on extending the scheme to “all farmers” and instead make it applicable to “eligible farmers who meet certain conditions”.

Mr Rao held a meeting with bankers in the Secretariat on Wednesday to discuss the scheme. The bankers brought to his notice that it would require nearly Rs 26,000 crore to waive loans up to Rs 1 lakh for all the farmers, and suggested that the scheme be implemented with some “conditions”.

Large quantity of chemical-laced mangoes seized

TRICHY: Civic authorities on Tuesday seized and destroyed nearly 7,000 kg of mangoes which were found ripened using calcium carbide. This followed a raid conducted by corporation health officials in the godowns of fruit merchants located across the Gandhi Market.

Corporation authorities said carbide stones which were used for ripening mangoes were also seized along with powders of the same chemical. Ash from the stones engulfed the godowns during the raid.

The seized fruits were dumped into a garbage truck and were taken away for destroying. City health officer Dr S Maariappan led the team of civic officials during the raid. Officials are yet to estimate the total value of the destroyed mangoes.

Though traders have been warned about the hazards of artificial ripening, wholesale merchants still practice it. Speaking after conducting the raids, Maariappan said shops were found selling mangoes that were artificially ripened and they were seized to protect the health of consumers.

Earlier during two raids 21.15 tonnes of artificially-ripened mangoes of several varieties were seized. A team from the food safety wing had raided 50 shops in Gandhi Market on April 30. Seized mangoes kept in 110 cases were valued at Rs 1.47 lakh. On May 20, a team led by district collector Jayashree Muralidharan seized about 18.9 tonnes of mangoes from six godowns at Mambalasalai in Srirangam.

Food safety officials have been alerting public about the risks involved in consuming mangoes. They advise people to buy mangoes with care. Artificially ripened mangoes lack greenish patches and spot only black patches and wrinkles. Consumption of mangoes treated with calcium carbide is extremely hazardous because it contains traces of arsenic and phosphorus. Such mangoes can cause mouth ulcers, gastric problems, diarrhoea and skin rashes.

Calcium carbide produces maximum artificial heat which helps ripen the mangoes within 25-26 hours. Calcium carbide can be used when the mangoes are 30-40% ripe. Traders across the country use the same technique to ripen bananas.

[Post a comment](#)

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How long will the Rubber stock stretch?



Rubber consumers have called for an independent study to assess the total stock of natural rubber in the country as they feel availability has taken a turn for the worse in the current year.

Terming the stock figures projected by the Rubber Board as divorced from reality, they said there has been practically no sale of natural rubber for most of May. According to the latest Rubber Board figures, natural rubber stock availability at the end of April was 2.35 lakh tonne.

Currently, domestic rubber prices are ruling at around Rs 30/ kg higher than international prices. That should be enough trigger for the stock lying with the dealers to find its way to the market. The continued acute shortage only lends credence to industry's contention that the stock position as suggested by the Rubber Board may be exaggerated. An independent study to check the stock position will do a lot of good to the rubber sector in India," said Niraj Thakkar, president of the All India Rubber Industries Association (AIRIA).

The Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) has stated that a virtual absence of natural rubber in local markets is playing havoc with production schedules at tyre manufacturers. While tyre companies have already contracted imports to meet the deficit, local availability is much lower than anticipated during the current fiscal.

"If the present situation is any reflection, our added concern is about the likely scenario in the coming months. While tyre companies do anticipate domestic deficit in natural rubber for which imports are being and will continue to be contracted, certain baseline quantity is expected from the domestic market" added Thakkar.

THE  NEW
INDIAN EXPRESS

Horticulture Department Waves its Green Wand Across Bangalore

BANGALORE: On World Environment Day on Thursday, the Horticulture Department will gift the city several rare fruit and flowering species in a bid to sustain its green charm.

The department will plant 571 saplings, including fruit and scented varieties at Lalbagh, Cubbon Park, Raj Bhavan and Indira Gandhi Musical Fountain Garden. Department Director D L Maheshwarappa said 24 rare species will be planted in and around Cubbon Park and 10 at Lalbagh, as part of efforts by a committee headed by environmentalist A N Yellappa Reddy.

“Planting a sapling is not enough. There should be landscape designing with flowering and fruit trees, creepers, shrubs and ramblers. With this initiative, Cubbon Park and Lalbagh will see flowers round the year”, Reddy said.

He noted that many trees at the spots have reached their uprooting stage, adding that saplings will be planted where there is less vegetation.

Flower Power

Deputy Director of Cubbon Park, Mahantesh Murgod, said ramblers like the Philippines Jade Vine and the Blue Plumbago which flowers from December, and the Red Jade from New Guinea which flowers in July-September and January-February will be planted. To attract birds, fruit-bearing trees like Malay Apple (Australia), fig and litchi will be planted in the nursery area, he said.

“About 50 Oleander saplings of Eurasian origin and crepe flower and Crepe Myrtle from China are ready. The pink Oleander blooms in all seasons and the crepe variety in May and August. The Yellow Oleander and Trumpet, a tropical flower, will also be planted”, Murgod said. Another addition is the Ylang-Ylang tree of Myanmar, known for its fragrance, and which blooms in May-July and September- October.

Green Spots

As per the committee’s plan, tree avenues will be created at vacant spots near Siddapura Gate at Lalbagh.

At Cubbon Park, the saplings will be planted on Siddaiah Road, at Bal Bhavan, State Government Employees’ Association office, Ringwood Circle, Band Stand, Press Club, Indira Gandhi Musical Fountain Garden and Raj Bhavan.

HIKE IN LALBAGH ENTRY FEE?

In the last financial year, the collection at Lalbagh, in entry fee and through sale of saplings, touched `1.8 crore but authorities are finding it difficult to maintain the garden. Deputy Director (DD) of Lalbagh, J Gunavantha, said, while `10 is collected as entry fee at present, more than half of this revenue is diverted to BWSSB for its service and the remaining is spent on staff's salaries. Agreeing with Gunavantha, environmentalist Reddy said a reasonable revision in entry fee has been proposed. Proposals to set up an orchidarium and an aquarium have also been sent to the government, he added.

STAY CLOSE TO NATURE Today, AND EVERY DAY

- Kempegowda International Airport Limited will plant saplings on Thursday. It has unveiled a Green Map about various initiatives for a sustainable environment.
- Surana College students will clean the area outside the institute. Volunteers will distribute free saplings to residents.
- The Uttarahalli Magakere Walkers' Association, along with Ingersoll Rand, will plant 100 saplings at the lake and tend them for a year.
- Airtel will give a sapling to every customer who opts for e-billing or the 'pay from home' system. The saplings will be distributed at Airtel Relationship Centres across the city.
- Students of TRIO World School will distribute saplings.
- Students of Canadian International School came up with innovative posters and created slogans to celebrate World Environment Day at their campus on Wednesday.

A Soul Space for Farmers



BANGALORE: Celebrated every year on June 5, World Environment Day aims to create awareness about environmental issues. This has encouraged companies and individuals across the world to show their solidarity for climate change and the environment through

various positive initiatives. Here is one such initiative, which is trying hard to make a difference to the society.

"Mothers must take the onus of realising their children's dreams," says Tulsi Devi, a farmer's wife who contributes to the family income by making cold pressed Apricot oil and selling it to SoulTree, an organisation which offers a range of certified natural beauty and personal care products.

Tulsi, is one of the many farmers in the country who are part of the family occupation of cultivating herbs and selling it to companies to earn a living. "With more and more people shying away from farming, lands are turning into wastelands due to lack of cultivation and farming is no longer seen as a viable option. Hence, growing organic crops for large companies assures us of stable returns and we hope something can be done to encourage this," adds another farmer, Bahadur Singh.

The United Nations had declared the year 2014 as the International Year of Family Farming with an aim to stimulate policies for the sustainable development of farmers, their families and the community at large. And companies like SoulTree have an integral role to play in this direction.

Vishal Bhandari, managing director of SoulTree, agrees, "Family farming represents an opportunity to boost local economies. By supporting farmers in getting the fair prices for the crops, we can help them support their livelihoods and ensure their well-being."

Considering these farmers are the 'People behind SoulTree,' on the occasion of the World Environment Day on June 5, the company has taken a step to make sure the work of the farmers doesn't go unappreciated.

Vishal explains, "We wanted to show the farmers how we and our customers are thankful for the work they are doing. We have encouraged our consumers to write a short message for them on a postcard and show them that their dedication and hard work makes a difference."

SoulTree, is one of the few companies in India which works with farmers like Tulsi and Bahadur. The company works directly with farmer groups primarily in Uttarakhand. In other areas, they work closely with small organisations that aggregate herbs from local organic farmers. "In most cases, herbs are grown by the farmers in their small holdings, often in addition to other staple crops," Vishal states.

Presently, the company works with a total of 3,000 farmers, directly and indirectly, to source organic herbs to make their products and they sell the products across India. In Bangalore, the products are available in stores like Nisarga Shoppe, Nammane Organics, Aurazia Wellness as well as Religare Wellness outlets. With growing awareness about the benefits of organic products, Vishal says, "We have witnessed a lot of online purchases and interest from the people in Bangalore. We have increased our presence in the city in just two years."

Conditions Apply for Farm Loan Waiver

HYDERABAD: The State government on Wednesday decided to waive agriculture loans up to `one lakh availed by farmers after June 1 last year. The decision was taken after Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao conferred with bankers at the Secretariat.

The loan waiver is applicable only to farm loans, not loans taken by farmers after pledging gold and land documents since the latter do not fall under the ambit of agriculture loans.

After KCR's meeting with the bankers, Finance Minister Etela Rajender told reporters, "We will keep our promise. Loans up to `one lakh availed after June 1, 2013 will be waived." In other words, loans borrowed before or on June 1 last year will have to be repaid by the farmers. "Loans carried forward to the cut-off date will not be waived," official sources said. By restricting the scheme to the last financial year, the State government has halved the burden from `25,000 crore to `12,000 crore. The Chief Minister, during the course of his meeting with the bankers, asked them to get back to him again on Monday with details of farm loan accounts and the quantum of outstanding farm loans. "The government will finalise the scheme after receiving inputs from the bankers. Thereafter, it will be placed before the Cabinet for approval," Rajender said.

Earlier, addressing his maiden public meeting after assuming the CM's mantle at Gajwel, KCR said loan waiver scheme would benefit 23 lakh farmers. "We will waive the loans within the next 10 days," he announced. On the other side of the divide, in Andhra Pradesh too, doubts are cropping up over a similar promise made by TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu — more so, because the scheme would entail a burden of `80,000 crore on the exchequer in the State.

It is likely that the Chandrababu Naidu-led government will also add riders in a bid to bring down the burden to the extent possible without being seen as watering down the promise.

Sources said Naidu is contemplating a "balancing act" — transferring funds under different heads to the scheme even while pruning it to the maximum extent possible without inviting the wrath of the farmers.

The development comes in the wake of questions being raised by experts over the feasibility of granting loan waiver given that the residuary State will be starting off with a substantial revenue deficit.

M Chary set to be telangana speaker

Bhupalapalle TRS MLA Sirikonda Madhusudhana Chary will be the first Speaker of the Telangana Legislative Assembly. Though Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao had initially offered the job to Dharmapuri MLA Koppula Eshwar, the latter didn't show interest. KCR is likely to expand his Cabinet soon and may induct two women this time. Konda Surekha is likely to be one.

Venugopalachary, tejavath spl reps

Former union minister S Venugopalachary and retired IAS officer Ramachandru Tejavath have been appointed special representatives of the Telangana government in New Delhi. They have been accorded Cabinet rank and will be looking after the State's interests in the national capital. Orders to this effect were issued by Principal Secretary Ajay Misra.