

## **Plan to revive cultivation of Bellary onion in Tirupur**

Steps are on to revive commercial scale cultivation of Bellary onion in a big way in Tirupur district through cluster-based approach with the plans to bring 400 acres immediately under the crop in the initial phase. “It is now almost three decades since the large scale cultivation of Bellary onion literally vanished from the district due to various factors and we will be extending critical inputs at heavily subsidised rates to farmers spread over eight blocks in Tirupur for reviving the mass production of the crop,” Deputy Director of Horticulture M. Tamilselvan told *The Hindu*. Farming experts attributed the dissipation of the crop’s cultivation in the district to the dwindling enthusiasm among farmers to raise the crop over a period of time. “It takes over 100 days from the date of sowing to get Bellary onion harvested vis-à-vis almost 70 days for small onions. With dip in rainfall and fluctuations in market prices of Bellary Onion, the farmers have lost interest to raise the crop which is not giving adequate returns despite the long duration of crop raising,” pointed out K.C.M. Balasubramanian, a farmer and retired agriculture economist. He added, “entry of spurious seeds was also one another major factor that contributed to the decline in acreage after farmers became frustrated over the low yield”.

## **Package**

Under the revival package, each of the select farmers in Tirupur, Palladam, Pongalur, Kundadam, Dharapuram, Gudimangalam, Udumalpet and Madathukulam blocks would be given a specified package comprising seeds, water soluble fertilisers, bio fertilisers, plant protection chemicals and micro nutrient mixtures by the Horticulture department. “With favourable monsoon, adequate water releases through Parambikulam Main Canal and technical assistances to the farmers, the Bellary onion cultivation is set to flourish again,” Mr. Tamilselvan said.

About 400 acres in the district to be brought under the crop in the initial phase

## **Solapur farmer to take on Ajit Pawar**

Throwing down the gauntlet before Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Ajit Pawar, Solapur-based farmer-activist Prabhakar Deshmukh, popularly known as ‘Bhaiyyaji’, said he would contest against Mr. Pawar in the upcoming State Assembly

elections. Addressing a press conference on Monday in Solapur, Mr. Deshmukh said he would fight against Mr. Pawar from the latter's bastion in Baramati. Mr. Deshmukh made news in March last year when he went on a two-month hunger strike to protest against the ruling Congress-NCP and their alleged role in corrupt practices and the government's callous handling of the drought stalking the State at the time. His agitation had prompted a reaction from Mr. Pawar who had said: "There is this person from Solapur, on a hunger strike for 55 days, demanding that water be released from the [Ujani] dam [in Solapur district]. But where are we going to get water from? Should we urinate? And how will we do that when there is no water to drink?" Later, in April, the Bombay High Court had ordered the State to promptly release water into the dry Ujani dam.

### **Surya Raitha to light up farmers' lives**

In an effort to harness solar energy for those who till the soil in the State, the State government announced the launch of the ambitious Surya Raitha programme. The programme will ensure solar panels are placed to generate electricity for running irrigation pumpsets, and will also enable farmers to sell excess power generated to the government. Under the scheme, a farmer can install a solar power-run pumpset on his farm with 90 per cent subsidy from the government. The government will purchase excess power generated by the farmer at Rs. 9.56 per unit (if the farmer has not taken subsidy); Rs. 7.20 per unit (if the farmer has taken subsidy). This programme is envisaged for the Irrigation Pump (IP) sets on the dedicated IP feeders. Energy Minister D.K. Shivakumar claimed on Monday that it is the first scheme of its kind in the country. This is part of the State's Solar Policy 2014-2021. The Union government, in its recent budget, had announced energising one lakh solar irrigation pumpsets by allocating Rs. 400 crore. The State government was likely to get 10,000 solar power-driven agricultural pump sets out of that. "We are getting 2,400 pumpsets in the first phase from the Centre," he said. Solar energy is generated through the year, and since farmers do not need power all 365 days, they can transmit excess power generated to the power grid, he said.

### **Status quo**

At the moment, the government supplies about 39 per cent of total power produced in the State to farmers, incurring an expenditure of Rs. 7,200 crore a year. However, there is no plan to discontinue the system of supplying free power to farmers, he clarified.

The sweet sap from coconut flowers is swinging fortunes in favour of the beleaguered coconut farmers in the State, numbering roughly 4.2 million. One of them at Muthalamada in Palakkad has earned over Rs.55,000 during August from 17 trees. Unheard of for coconut farmers, the handsome earnings have bolstered the Coconut Development Board's plans to turn India into a global hub for Neera derivatives over the next five years. The board estimates that even if one per cent of the 18 crore coconut trees in Kerala are tapped for Neera, it will generate Rs.5,400 crore yearly. A sum of Rs.2,700 crore will go directly to the farmers, Board Chairman T.K. Jose said on the eve of the World Coconut Day celebrations in Bangalore. He said the estimates were based on the conservative consideration that a tree yielded a litre of neera a day. Tom Thomas, the happy farmer from Muthalamada, said he saw yields going up to 3.5 litres a day a tree. He is one of the 20,000 shareholders in the Palakkad Coconut Producer Company and among the first 20 farmers who leased their trees for Neera tapping late June. Farmers who have 15 trees under Neera tapping earn Rs.45,000 a month on an average with the current price of Neera and its derivatives, P. Vinod Kumar, chairman of the producer company, said. Mr. Vinod Kumar said Neera tappers too had seen their fortunes improve. The 25 tappers with the company were permanent employees and paid Rs.20,000 a month in salaries and incentives, along with another Rs.5,000 towards their social security net.

Neera expected to generate Rs.5,400 crore yearly

Farmers who have 15 trees under Neera tapping earn Rs.45,000 a month

### **What's the colour of red banana?**

WONDER Bunch: The banana bunch with peels of two colours on sale at a shop in Virudhunagar. Buying a bunch of bananas is a routine business for A. Ramamoorthy, who runs a coffee shop on Katcheri Road here. But, the bunch he had bought on Sunday has surprised not only him, but also the on-lookers.

For, the bunch has two varieties of fruits — those with red with reddish peels and those with yellowish peels. "I went to the market to buy red-banana and got this bunch. The peels were green then. After a night, when I saw them this morning, half of them turned reddish and another half yellowish," Mr. Ramamoorthy said. He said he had never seen such a unique bunch in his last five years of business. "Many customers are awe-struck. They also say they have not seen such a wonder before," he said. The ones on the right side of the bunch have fruits with red peels while on the left have yellow peels. A horticulture expert said this type of bunches are rarest of the rare cases. "This

could be due to mutation or physiological disorder,” he said. Stating that banana was a photo-sensitive crop, he said light-rays, thunder or lightning can impact the crop. “Not only the colour of the peels, but also the taste, texture and the total soluble sugar could differ between the fruits of different colours,” he said. However, Mr. Ramamoorthy said he did not taste both varieties and hence could not find any difference in taste. “The bananas are so big that I cannot eat two,” he said with a chuckle. But, the ‘bunch of wonder’ has seen that only the red bananas being bought by customers. “Usually red banana is costlier. But, the fruits being in the same bunch, I fixed Rs. 10 each to all the bananas. However, except for one customer, no one else preferred the yellow ones,” he said. The ones on the right side of the bunch have fruits with red peels while on the left have yellow peels.

### **Launch fresh search operations: fisherfolk**

About 300 Pamban fishermen and their family members observed a day’s fast here on Monday, urging the government and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) to launch fresh search operations to trace and rescue three fishermen who went missing at the early hours of August 26 after their boat sunk while fishing on the high seas. As there was no information about the three missing fishermen — J. Daniel (25), J. Wilson (19) and L. Erson (20), the fishermen observed a fast near the bus stand and expressed dissatisfaction over the search operation conducted by the ICG and appealed to the State and Central governments to order fresh search. M.X.A. Simon, president of the Paravar Welfare Association, who led the fast, said though the ICG had launched a search operation after four fishermen went missing on August 26, only the local fishermen had rescued one of them. After John Kennedy, the rescued fishermen said the other fishermen, including his son Daniel, could have drifted into the Sri Lankan waters, no sincere effort seemed to have been made by the authorities to prevail upon the Lankan government for search in the Lankan waters, he alleged. The ICG said it had conducted aerial search in its Dornier aircraft and the Navy in its helicopter, but they believed to have confined themselves to the Indian waters, making the search a futile exercise, he said. “The ICG has all facilities but they are not of much use to us,” he said.

He said while other fishermen ended the fast in the evening, family members of the three fishermen continued the fast till late on Monday evening. We will request them to give up the fast tomorrow,” he said. The four fishermen had set out for fishing on August 25 and they were fishing on the high seas between Katchatheevu and Delft island when their boat sunk after seepage water, at the early hours of the next day.

### **Declare Gulbarga drought-hit: Patil**

B.R. Patil, Aland MLA, has urged the government to declare Gulbarga a district-drought hit and extend relief measures to the farmers. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Mr. Patil urged Chief minister Siddaramaiah to visit the district and hold a review meeting to take up development programmes to benefit the people. Mr. Patil said that the Agriculture Department and the Revenue Department should conduct a joint survey in all the taluks to work out a suitable compensation plan based on the actual crop loss suffered by the farmers and extend compensation to the eligible farmers who had suffered crop loss due to drought and heavy rain during the monsoon. He said the farmers had suffered crop loss both by the moisture stress due to the failure of the monsoon and the heavy rainfall received in the last week. As per the norms of Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring centre the region with continuous dry spell, scanty rainfall four weeks during the monsoon would be considered eligible to declare drought hit, Mr. Patil added.

### **Pension to be disbursed to coir workers**

The Kerala Coir Workers Welfare Fund Board will distribute pension worth a total amount of Rs. 27.5 crore for coir workers. Speaking at a press conference, Board chairman A.K. Rajan said that each beneficiary will receive their pension amount, including outstanding dues of Rs. 4,500 for the period from January 1 to August 31. Mr. Rajan pointed out that the monthly pension, which was previously fixed at Rs. 300, has been hiked to Rs. 600 with effect from April 2014. The government has sanctioned a total amount of Rs. 63.445 crore for distribution of pension since 2013. There are as many as 65,418 beneficiaries for the pension scheme implemented by the Board at present. M. Abdul Salim, chief executive officer of the Board, said that the pension benefits will be distributed either directly or by electronic money order. He added that a system through which the benefits are remitted to bank accounts of beneficiaries will get underway soon. The amounts will be transferred to the accounts of those who have submitted the necessary details including bank details and account number. Beneficiaries will receive pension amount, including outstanding dues of Rs. 4,500 for the period from January 1 to August 31.

### **Coconut farmers make merry**

Widespread rains across Telangana since the last few days have not only revived standing crops in over 5 lakh acres, which were on the verge of withering, but have improved the prospects of other crops cultivated in about

78 lakh acres. The rains have brought cheer to a majority of the farmers as kharif cultivation in about 75 lakh acres is rain-fed while over 25 lakh acres is irrigated mostly with the help of borewells. The prospect of crops cultivated under canals has also improved to a large extent with the reservoirs in Krishna basin getting good inflows, though water levels in projects in the Godavari basin are not very encouraging. Further, rains have eased the demand-supply position of power to some extent. An average of 76.3 mm rainfall recorded between August 27 and August 30 is replenishing the groundwater table, which kept plummeting till the commencement of August last week. The prolonged dry spell in July depleted the groundwater table by an average 0.67 metres in the State compared to May with Nizamabad (1.55 m), Ranga Reddy (1.28 m) and Nalgonda (1.16 m) suffering the worst. "The present rains are worth thousands of crores to the farming community as they have improved the prospects of rain-fed and irrigated crops. They will speed up paddy transplantation and help farmers take up paddy cultivation in the modern seed-cum-drill method," B. Janardhan Reddy, Commissioner of Agriculture said. Severe moisture stress caused by long dry spells in July and August have pushed standing crops, mainly cotton, maize, soybean, pulses, paddy and coarse cereals in over 5.08 lakh acres to the brink of withering. Cotton, which is cultivated in about 38.52 lakh acres, in an extent of over 4.34 lakh acres was wilting before the revival of monsoon for the last one week. "Cotton stands to be rejuvenated from its stunted growth and withering condition with good rainfall for the last few days and farmers can rest assured with good yield even if it is likely to be affected to some extent. The rains will also revive maize crop, which was sown late," the Agriculture Commissioner stated. Cultivation of paddy has been only 64 per cent against the normal till August 27 while that of pulses stood at 66 per cent with greengram and blackgram sown only in half of the normal extent.

### **A struggle of two decades bears fruit**

It was a dream come true for the land oustees, particularly the SCs and STs of National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Ramagundam, with 35 of them securing employment and joining duties in the power station on Monday after waging a relentless struggle for 25 years. The NTPC Ramagundam, which had acquired land from them promised to provide them employment and made an agreement in 1988 to provide jobs to 225 oustees. But, only 141 persons were given jobs till 1991 and there were no recruitments for other jobs, mostly pertaining to the SC and ST communities. At this juncture, NTPC SC and ST Land Ousteers Association was formed by local leader S. Kumar and a relentless fight demanding employment to the SC and ST land oustees was

waged. The association approached all the constitutional bodies including the President, demanding justice to the SC\ST land oustees. The association staged dharnas, rasta rokos and hunger strikes demanding justice to the Dalits and tribal people. Finally, in 2013 the NTPC management accepted that they had failed to recruit 59 land oustees of the project and assured to recruit them. Accordingly, the process of recruitment was completed and 11 candidates selected from general category, 15 OBCs, 21 SCs and 12 STs.

### **Certificate verification**

On Monday, 35 persons who were selected in the recruitment process including 16 SCs and four STs joined their duties at the NTPC Ramagundam. The remaining persons' selection was pending due to verification of certificates. They arrived in a procession from Godavarikhani town and paid floral tributes to the statue of BR Ambedkar on the premises of NTPC township. Mr. Kumar thanked the NTPC management including the ED Srivatsava, AGM (HR) Harikumar and other officials for fulfilling the long cherished dream of the land oustees. He also urged the NTPC authorities to provide early promotions to these selected land oustees as they had lost their precious service due to late recruitment. On this occasion, he also thanked *The Hindu* for highlighting the plight of the land oustees since last 13 years in the district.

### **Congress threatens stir if government fails to waive crop loans**

DCC president K Mruthyunjayam has threatened to launch agitational programmes if the government failed to waive crop loans of the farmers in a time-bound programme as promised during the elections and provide fresh loans to take up farm activities. Talking to newsmen here on Monday, he alleged that the TRS had come to power by making false promise of waiving crop loans immediately after attaining power. But it was delaying the implementation of the promise on various pretexts, he said and demanded that the government clarify on the time it would take to waive the crop loans. He said that the farmers had not repaid their crop loans following the promise made by the TRS during the elections and the interest on the loans. accrued burdening the farming community. He also said that the government had not issued any fresh loans to the farmers on the pretext of waiver of crop loans. He also flayed the government for failing to provide assured power supply to farm sector. Terming the intensive household survey as a "farce and gimmick" to divert the attention of the people, he said that the survey would not serve any purpose as it was done in an unscientific manner. He found fault with the

government for not including the availability of ration card in the household survey. With regard to the by-elections to Medak LS seat, he said that the DCC had roped in the services of former Minister D Sridhar Babu, Jagtial legislator T Jeevan Reddy, former MP Ponnampallapalle Prabhakar, MLC T Santosh Kumar, KDCCB chairman K Ravinder Rao and others to campaign extensively in entire Siddipet Assembly segment falling in the parliament constituency.

### **Farmers in a fix over nativity**

Bifurcation blues continue to haunt people of both the newly formed Telangana and residuary Andhra Pradesh. Though both States have announced loan waiver to farmers, a number of farmers living in bordering villages may not get any benefit until the governments get clarity over their nativity. Speaking to *The Hindu*, a source in the district administration said that while some farmers live in Nalgonda district, they hold lands in neighbouring Guntur and Krishna districts, which are in Andhra Pradesh. Likewise, a number of farmers living in Krishna and Guntur districts own land in Nalgonda district. Another source said that more number of farmers from Andhra Pradesh have their lands in Telangana when compared to Telangana farmers having lands in Andhra Pradesh, which prompted the Telangana government to keep the list in abeyance. Sources further said that they have listed a number of farmers falling under these two categories and decided to keep them in abeyance for certain period until the governments form guidelines. An official working with the agriculture department observed that the State government may take the data collected through Intensive Household Survey (IHS-2014) conducted on August 19 into consideration to decide the eligibility of these farmers. However, the sources have declined to disclose the exact figure of farmers coming under these two categories. Kodad, Mellacheruvu, Mattampally, Nereducharla, Damaracherla, Peddavoora and Chandampet in Nalgonda district have borders with Krishna and Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. Krishna river divides both the States here. According to a rough estimation, over 4.38 lakh farmers are eligible for about Rs. 2,500 crore benefit from the loan waiver scheme in Nalgonda. But, the officials are still working on it. A final figure will be announced within a week. According to rough estimates, over 4.38 lakh farmers are expected to benefit from the loan waiver scheme.

### **Rains prompt agriculture operations**

Rains during the last few days have triggered agriculture operations in the district, which had not taken off till now due to scanty rains. Out of the 98,000 hectares of potential area for paddy crop, agriculture operations have



commenced in 45,000 hectares and the area might go up to 75,000 hectares in due course of time, Collector N. Yuvaraj told reporters on Monday. At present the district had a stock of 5,500 metric tons of urea and an additional quantity of 7,000 tons was sought to meet the demand, Mr. Yuvaraj said. The other fertilizers were available in adequate quantities. Aadhar seeding process was completed in the case of 3.13 lakh pension accounts out of the 3.20 lakh accounts and the gap of about 7,000 could be the number of non-existent pensioners. Aadhar seeding as far as ration cards was concerned was 77.84 per cent as on Sunday with city accounting for 81.5 per cent and rural 75.62 per cent. Mr. Yuvaraj said that 156 out of the 226 water purification plants under the NTR Sujala Sravanthi had received assured sponsorship from industries and institutions along with Simhachalam and two more temples. The water plants, meant to supply potable drinking water to rural areas where only hard water is available, were being set up in the district as a pilot project. A total of 376 habitations had been identified in the district for setting up the water plants. Seventy of them would be set up in the Agency area. A clear picture on location of the international airport, promised to Visakhapatnam in the AP Reorganisation Act, was expected to emerge in 10 days, as the Central Government committee was likely to submit its report, he said. Regarding land for the industries, the Coca-Cola company sought 50 acres to 100 acres of land for setting up a Rs. 500-crore plant. The National Disaster Response Force wanted two acres.

### **Bihar's flood-hit loot food grain from warehouse**

Flood victims in Bihar's Nalanda district broke into a government warehouse and looted food grain Monday to protest inadequate assistance given to them by the government, officials said. "Hundreds of flood victims forcibly broke open the lock of a godown (warehouse) of the State Disaster Management department at Sarmera block office in Nalanda in the presence of the police and looted rice and wheat," district official Sunil Kumar said. He said the food grain looted from the godown was meant for distribution among flood victims. According to Mr Kumar, 80 bags of wheat and over 250 bags of rice were carried away by the looters. Earlier, more than 2000 flood victims staged protest at block office, demanding adequate relief. Flood victims in Bihar Sharif, the headquarters of Nalanda district, blocked roads for hours last week protesting what they called inadequate relief and compensation. Nalanda is one of the 15 flood-affected districts in the state. A few days ago, flood victims in Saharsa, Supaul and Khagaria also staged protests against insufficient relief given to them. More than 1.8 million people have been affected by the floods with major rivers, including the Ganga, Kosi, Gandak and Bagmati,

submerging large tracts of land and forcing thousands to be evacuated. Till date, floods have claimed over 20 lives, including 12 in Nalanda. – IANS

### **Farmers in last-mile villages worried over water crisis**

*Water yet to reach some villages even after 21 days*

Farmers in the tail-end areas including a part of Vedaranyam, Vaimedu, Thalaignayiru, Therkurajan, and Puthumanniyaru have expressed concern over the delay in arrival of water in their areas of the district as they are depending on water for agriculture purpose from Harichandra and Poraivaikkal river. Even 21 days after releasing water from Mettur dam, the water was yet to reach a few parts of the tail end areas. The farmers who undertook direct sowing in this area had expressed their displeasure over inadequate water to save seeds which were in sprouted stage. Lack of adequate water in this stage would affect the yield. Because of good rainfall in the catchment areas of the Cauvery there was comfortable storage in Mettur dam. Even though the Government had taken steps to dredge the water bodies and channels, work had not been completed in many parts of the district and in the tailend areas. This would affect the free flow of water to the tailend areas, said the president of Thalaignayiru Farmers' Association, Ayyappan. Water from the Cauvery would be diverted to its various tributaries and farmers from Kollidam were getting meagre quantum of water from the Therkurajan. Hence 1,000 more cusecs should be released to speed up agriculture operation, said V. Subramanian, district secretary of All India Kisan Sabha. If additional quantum of water was released, sprouts could be saved and the nurseries could be transplanted within 25 days. Further, it would withstand the expected rain in southwest monsoon which was expected to begin within 10 days, said Farmers' Federation secretary Viswanathan of Kollidam. The water was released from Mettur dam on August 10 and 14 at Kallanai of the same month. The farmers in different parts of the district got water through turn system. But they had demanded regular supply of water for undertaking agriculture operations in full swing. The agriculture department had targeted samba paddy coverage on about 1.85 lakh hectares of land in the district. Farmers had completed direct sowing on over 48,000 hectares of land and had transplanted paddy crops on over 60,500 hectares, according to official sources.

### **Water level at Mettur**

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 103.84 feet on Monday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 5,610 cusecs and the discharge 17,000 cusecs.

# THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

## **State Targets 5 lakh Tonne from Koraput by Next Year**

Reeling under potato crisis for nearly a month due to embargo on supply of the vegetable by the West Bengal Government, Odisha Government on Monday set a target to produce five lakh tonnes of potato in Koraput district by 2015. To accomplish the target, a project proposal prepared by PACT (Partners for Agri Communities and Tribal) was discussed at a high-level meeting held here under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Gokul Chandra Pati and attended by Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture Sanjeev Chopra along with a team of experts. The project has been designed to expand potato farming to 50,000 acres involving 8,000 farmers of 200 villages in 10 blocks of Koraput district. The project envisages fetching an annual income of `two lakh per acre to the farmer through year-round assisted farming. The project will be monitored through a comprehensive accountable and transparent process built on a world class Information and Communication Technology (ICT) platform. "The ICT platform will include all processes 'from seed to buyer' with on-demand reporting system. The cost of the project has been estimated at `106 crore and will be implemented in PPCP (Public Private and Community Partnership) mode," said Horticulture Director Sanjeev Chadha.

## **Karnataka Only State to Record Excess Rain This Monsoon**

South-interior Karnataka currently has the distinction of being the only region in India to have received excess rainfall this season. From June to September 1 this year, the region which usually receives 522.9 mm rainfall, instead got 642 mm, an excess of 23 per cent, according to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). North and coastal Karnataka witnessed normal rainfall. Coastal Karnataka received 2,788.9 mm as against the usual 2,795.6 mm, while the northern part of the state received 399.4 mm as against 363.2 mm, an additional 10 per cent. As of August 31, the state on the whole received 742.6 mm rainfall against the normal 673.7 mm, an excess of 10 per cent. Among the other south Indian states, with the exception of Andhra Pradesh which has witnessed a deficit, Kerala and Tamil Nadu saw normal precipitation during the said period. Across the country, both Punjab (-64 per cent) and Chandigarh (-65 per cent), witnessed scanty rainfall. Most other states, however, received normal to deficit rainfall. IMD Bangalore officials said the current spell of rainfall in the state is due to low pressure in the lower Chhattisgarh-upper

Andhra Pradesh area. Another depression is expected in the Bay of Bengal within a month, which will further strengthen the monsoon in the state. The monsoon is expected to continue till the end of September in Karnataka. IMD Bangalore director Puttanna told Express that the monsoon, which was weak during its onset in June, has made a complete come back. "However, the low pressure in northern Andhra Pradesh has dissipated. Hence, the state on the whole will witness less rainfall in the coming days, while coastal Karnataka and the Malnad region, which had received normal rainfall till now, will witness heavy rain in the next week," he said. Even north Karnataka, which has received heavy rains in the last fortnight, will see subdued precipitation in the coming days. This is due to the weather difference caused by the dissipation of the low pressure area, which will result in high wind speeds, officials said.

### **Agri Sector Suffers Rs 53.6 Cr Loss**

The agricultural sector in the district has suffered a loss of Rs 53.6 crore in this monsoon so far, said District Collector N Padmakumar. He was speaking at the Crisis Management Committee meeting held at the Collectorate here on Monday. Paddy crops worth Rs 45.3 crore were destroyed and coconut farmers suffered a loss of Rs 8.3 crore. The bunds of 94 paddy polders were also breached in the rain. The crisis management committee has approved Rs 2 crore for the reconstruction of the breached bunds. The report will be submitted to the state-level crisis management committee, the Collector said. The committee has approved an estimate of Rs 1.75 crore for the strengthening of outer bunds of 60 paddy polders.

### **Kunnathukal Panchayat Proves to be a Success Story in Vegetable Cultivation**

The fluctuations in weather and the march of time have hardly dampened the spirit of farmers in Kunnathukal, a panchayat in the southern-most part of the state. In the panchayat which has the honour of the single highest profit-making unit of Vegetable and Fruits Promotion Council Keralam (VFPCCK), farming is a natural course of life. Kunnathukal village, located 40 km away from the city, also stands on top in the trading of bananas in the state. The cultivation and trading of fruits and vegetables, mostly of bananas, which was started 16 years back with a turnover of Rs 2 to Rs 3 lakh per year has now grown to a commercial success by achieving a turnover of Rs 6.23 crore last year. The turnover for the year 2011-12 was Rs 4.53 crore. Of the Rs 6.23 crore, trading in bananas alone contributed Rs 6.13 crore. Koovappady in Ernakulam, the panchayat that stands second in the list, had a total turnover of Rs 4.27 crore of which trading of bananas was worth Rs 3.63 crore. While Kunnathukal sold

2024 metric tonnes of vegetables and 1971 mt of bananas, the corresponding figures of Pariyaram in Thrissur, the panchayat that stands second quantity-wise, were 1841 mt and 1791 metric tonnes respectively. There are 22 farmers markets - Swasraya Karshaka Samithis - functioning under the VFPCCK in Kunnathukal panchayat and all of them are engaged primarily in the cultivation and trading of bananas. "There is no reduction in the import of bananas or vegetables from Tamil Nadu due to the high production in Kunnathukal which is near the border. However, the noteworthy fact is that the Kunnathukal experience is a model for the people of the region and they have started thinking of promoting farming. Many farmers from the neighbouring panchayats like Kollayil and Parassala have also been influenced by the success story of Kunnathukal," VFPCCK district manager Anil Kumar G R told 'Express'. There were seven farmers committees with 83 farmers in Kunnathukal which started functioning in 1997 in the beginning and this has grown to 22 committees with 360 farmers at present. Among them, ten committees sell farming produce worth more than Rs 10 lakh a year. "Around 20 to 30 farmers are joining farming in the panchayat every year. The VFPCCK as part of its scheme of providing assistance for the farmers committees which have been showing growth is giving financial aid to Kunnathukal panchayat also. VFPCCK purchased land worth Rs 20 lakh and an office was built for the committees," said Anil Kumar.



### **India is 3rd country to come up with 'seed less' kinnows**

Iron mesh cages enclose India's first seedless kinnows at the fruit research farm of the Punjab Agricultural University in Ludhiana. Dr H S Rattanpal, a PAU scientist working on the seedless variety of the citrus fruit since 2006, has successfully grown four saplings that are kept guarded in a cages to avoid 'stealing, tampering or any mishap with precious research material'. India has now become the third country, after the US and Pakistan, to develop the seedless kinnow that has just two or three seeds as against 25-30 seeds otherwise. However, commercialisation of this variety across the country will take some more time. Dr M I S Gill, head of the fruit sciences department at PAU, and Dr S S Gosal, director of research, confirmed the development but refused to share details saying, "Information cannot be revealed at this stage." A senior scientist from PAU said, "The seeds in kinnow are a major barrier in exporting the fruit to Europe. At present, the export market for citrus fruits is

worth \$2.13 billion. Pakistan accounts for nearly 2.5 per cent of kinnow export, while India's share is less than one per cent. Last year, Pakistan started selling low-seed kinnow saplings to farmers, almost 500 a day, and their export is expected to grow when kinnow orchards start giving fruit. Their plants have reached nurseries, ours are in the research farm."Till date, the plants at PAU have yielded two harvests. "These had less seeds. Our aim is to develop fruit with zero seeds. The board of management advised scientists to air-cage the plants as they can be stolen or damaged. It will take at least two more years to introduce the plants commercially," the scientist added.

## Business Standard

### **Grain Board urged for wheat export boost**

The wheat industry has asked for government intervention to boost its export. Despite this being a wheat-surplus country, export has been "negligible" till now, it has said, mainly due to price and quality issues. Wheat export in April-May last year was \$475 million. It came down to \$367 mn in the same period this year and has been inconsequential after this. It wants the Centre to set up a Grain Board, to fix standards, fix prices and other helpful measures. Speaking to reporters after announcing a two-day international wheat seminar, to begin here on Tuesday, Ratan Gupta, member of the Wheat Products Promotion Society, said despite being the second largest producer in the world at 95 million tonnes (mt) annually, India could export only around seven mt in the previous crop season, due to prices here being more than abroad. Gupta said the country needed technology to improve soil conditions, fertiliser usage, identifying the right seeds and the right kind of segregation to meet global standards, as well as price parity. N K Mehta, senior vice-president, All India Bread Manufacturers' Association and senior general manager (franchising) Modern Food division, Hindustan Unilever, said price, quality, storage and segregation of particular types required for export were the major challenges. Indian standard wheat quotes globally at Rs 16,500 a tonne, he said, while the made-in-India price is Rs 17,500-18,000 a tonne. He said Canada exported 25 mt yearly and tested every grain, in a clearly laid structure. In every 1,000 tonnes it takes two kg at random and does checks on 21 parameters. Ukraine, the next big emerging force, recently set up a similar monitoring Board. "It is high time we consider setting up one," he said. Separately at the meet, the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India termed the Public Distribution System (PDS) a "cancer". Hitesh Chandak, its president, said: "Only around 40 per cent of people are getting benefited through PDS. The rest is getting diverted to the open market." In the open

market, he said, wheat was being quoted at Rs 18-19 a kg, compared to Rs 2 a kg in the PDS. Mehta of the All India Bread Manufacturers' Association suggested the government give atta (flour) through the PDS, instead of wheat. "Atta can be identified by way of a flour package, which is not possible in wheat," he said.

### **Coffee exports decline 5.4% in Jan-Aug**

Coffee export has dropped 5.4 per cent in the first eight months of the calendar year, between January and August, compared to the corresponding period of last year. The figure was 221,189 tonnes during the eight-month period compared to 233,784 tonnes in the same period of last year. In value terms, Indian exporters earned Rs 3,590 crore compared to Rs 3,438 crore in the same period last year. The unit value realisation went up to Rs 163,293 per tonne as against Rs 148,143 earlier. In dollar terms, \$591 million now as against \$638 mn a year before. "We had expected a decline mainly due to a short crop during the crop year 2013-14. Exporters were left with a shorter size than anticipated last year," said Ramesh Rajah, president, Coffee Exporters' Association. Exporters couldn't manage a larger benefit from the global price rise in the Arabica variety during the first and second quarter of the current financial year (April onwards) as the crop was short and exporters operated with lower inventory, he said. Adding prices had been volatile. The fluctuation was mainly dictated by Brazil, which reported swings in weather and crop prospects. "There are concerns of Brazil again not getting good rains for its next crop. The market is a little nervous and the prices, which had corrected in the last quarter, have shown some upward movement again. However, there is no visible trend in the international markets," said Rajah. "ICE December Arabica coffee futures settled up 1.2 cents, or 0.6 per cent at \$2.0120 per lb. The Second position closed the month up 1.2 percent, its second straight monthly gain. LIFFE November Robusta coffee futures closed up \$16, or 0.8 per cent, at \$2,055 a tonne," the Coffee Board said. Rajah said by the current trend, the full-year exports are likely to be in the range of 300,000 tonnes. In 2013, India exported 312,420 tonnes.

### **Farmers in Karnataka can now set up solar farms**

Karnataka today launched a scheme allowing farmers to set up small solar power plants in their farms and sell power at the tariff fixed by the Karnataka Energy Regulatory Commission. It would be covered by the 'Surya Raitha Scheme', under which the government will also supply solar pumpsets at subsidised prices to overcome the power crisis being faced by farmers due to a huge gap in demand and supply, Energy Minister D K Shivakumar told

reporters here. The Centre has allocated 100,000 pumpsets to all the states in the country, he said, adding that Karnataka hopes to get 10,000 pumpsets. The farmers would get subsidy up to 90 per cent, out of which 30 per cent would be borne by the Union Government, Shivakumar said. The pumpsets would be useful for farmers to get assured water for their fields and be useful in places where electricity is not available, he said. The farmers will be allowed to sell surplus power generated in their farms at the rate of Rs 9.56 per unit to Escoms (Electricity Supply Companies) without subsidy, the minister said.

## THE HINDU BusinessLine

### **More Bangladeshis to bite in to Bt brinjal**

Bangladesh will soon commence large scale production of Bt brinjal. To meet the growing demand for Bt brinjal seeds from the farming community, Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) will give the breeder seed to BADC ( Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation) which is the Government-owned seed production company for production and commercial supplies of Bt brinjal seeds. In 2013, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) got the go-ahead from its Environment and Forest Ministry, and Agricultural Ministry to commercialise Bt brinjal, the technology for which was developed by the Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company (Mahyco) – a researcher and marketer of hybrid seeds in India. Following this, BARI distributed sapling of four bt brinjal varieties to twenty farmers, who planted these in four different locations on 0.3 acres of land each. Three out of four Bangladeshi farmers who planted Bt brinjal in 2013 have seen significant increase in the marketable produce, says BARI. “Bt brinjal has been very effective against the key pest – the fruit and shoot borer,” says Mohammad Rafiqul Islam Mondal, Director-General, BARI.

### **Significant rise**

“While 15 out of the 20 farmers who planted Bt Brinjal have seen significant increase in the marketable yield; the produce of five farmers were impacted due to disease attack at the seedling phase. But the disease was caused by pests other than the fruit and shoot borer (FSB),” adds Mondal. According to BARI, not even a single fruit was affected by the FSB; in the case of conventional non-Bt brinjal, about 30-70 per cent of the produce is lost due to FSB attack. Also these 20 farmers did not take even a single spray of pesticide, asserts



Mondal. "Traditionally, farmers who plant the conventional non-bt brinjal tend to take 60-180 sprays per season depending on the pest incidence," he explains. According to Usha Zehr, Chief Technology Officer, Mahyco, the Bt technology will help farmers take the produce to the market within a shorter time. "In Maharashtra, brinjal farmers on an average take 27 sprays per acre; the number is much higher at about 80 in West Bengal. When the farmer applies pesticide he should not pluck the fruits for at least five days to ensure that there is no residue on the fruit. Whereas when you plant a Bt brinjal there is no waiting time in taking the produce to the market," explains Zehr. Also, unrestrained use of pesticides may prove hazardous to farmers' health in the long term. In many cases farmers do not adhere to the five-day window obviously for commercial reasons, she cautions. Hence fruits with pesticide residue can also get sold in the market. "In a Bt brinjal, there is no risk of pesticide residue as farmers don't have to use them," says Mondal. "We also plan to seek approval for five more varieties after the Rabi season. In October, we will be giving the Bt brinjal seed to 100 farmers to cultivate it on their fields. BARI's on-farm research division, which will provide training to farmers on this technology, will closely monitor the outcome of this," said Mondal. India is, however, yet to accord approval for adoption of Bt technology in brinjal, though Bt cotton has been used in the country for a long time.

### **Long-term effects**

Brinjal being a food crop, there have been worries about the long-term effects on consumers, if they directly ingest genetically modified food. "The long term impact of genetically modified foods is still unclear. This being a nascent technology, its safety needs to be established over a longer period of time – at least 25 to 30 years" says Bhargavi Rao, Trustee, Environment Support Group-Trust, an NGO which fights the cause of environmental issues. But, BARI which has already commercialised the crop in Bangladesh, counters: "safety tests have been conducted from accredited labs in Bangladesh, thereby confirming that Bt brinjal is safe for human consumption. Bt brinjal is harmless to the beneficial insects and non-target organisms," explains Mondal. In India too, the technology was given a go-ahead by the GEAC (Genetic Engineering Approval Committee) based on the positive results established through the field trials conducted by Mahyco. While Bangladesh has gone ahead and adopted the Bt Brinjal technology, the commercial release of Bt brinjal in India has been stalled due to a moratorium imposed by the Environment Ministry back in 2010. "While Bangladeshi farmers have benefited from this technology, their Indian counterparts have been denied access, even as bio safety clearance

by experts is already in place,” says Mahyco’s Zehr.

### **To combat price hike, Govt relaxes fumigation norms for imported onions**

With no let-up in the prices of onions, the Government on Monday eased the norms for imports of the edible bulbs by allowing fumigation in India up to November 30, as also relaxing the penalty. Consignments of imported onions that arrive in Indian ports without fumigation and endorsement to that effect on the phytosanitary certificate (PSC) would be fumigated in India by the importer through an accredited treatment provider, an official release said, adding that such consignments would be inspected thoroughly by quarantine officials and released only if found free from pests and diseases of concern to India. “The consignments of onions for consumption will not be subjected to the penal fees on account of non-compliance of conditions of import,” the release added. Fumigation is done to get rid of pests by using a technique that either poisons or suffocates the pests. While retail prices of onions have eased somewhat of late, prices are likely to rise with reports of deficient monsoons affecting domestic supplies and an expected increase in demand as the festive season kicks off this month.

### **Cotton acreage at a new high as farmers shift from soya**

Cotton acreage this *kharif* has touched a new high with the fibre crop gaining area from crops such as soyabean and corn in key growing States of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Area under cotton has risen to a record 12.25 million hectares, an increase of 12 per cent over last year’s 11.16 million ha and is poised to touch 12.5 million ha with plantings still on in coastal Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. “Cotton acreage this year is at a new record. The sowing is still on in Andhra and Tamil Nadu and the overall acreage could increase by two to three lakh ha more,” said KR Kranthi, Director at the Nagpur-based Central Institute of Cotton Research (CICR). Previously, the cotton acreage had touched a high of 12.19 million ha in 2011. Kranthi attributed the increase in cotton acreage this year mainly to the high cost of soyabean seeds and the impact of delayed monsoon on its plantings that prompted the farmers to switch over to the fibre crop. The switchover has boosted cottonseed sales, bringing cheers to the hybrid seed industry. M Prabhakara Rao, Chairman, National Seed Association of India and CMD of Hyderabad-based Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd, estimates a 10-12 per cent growth in seed sales at around 47 million packets (each 450 gram) this year. However, the seed sales of other crops such as corn and rice were a bit

subdued. “The delay in monsoon prompted farmers to switch over to cotton, which is more resilient to drought,” Rao said. M Ramasami, Chairman and Managing Director of Rasi Seeds, expects growth at 20-25 per cent to around 38 lakh packets this year. He expects the acreage in Tamil Nadu to increase by 20-25 per cent as sowing would go on till mid-September. Increase in acreage would mean a higher crop, this year too. However, experts say it is too early to comment on the crop size. In 2013-14, cotton output stood at a record 395 lakh bales of 170 kg each, according to the Cotton Association of India. Another high crop this year would keep the prices under pressure, experts said.

### **Govt rebate of extra Rs.6/quintal ‘inadequate’: UP sugar mills**

Private sugar mills in Uttar Pradesh, which owe over Rs. 5,000 crore to cane farmers, on Monday said the State Government’s offer of an additional rebate of Rs. 6/quintal to enable them to clear arrears was ‘inadequate’. In a statement on Monday, the millers said earlier they were given a relief of Rs. 11/quintal, taking the total subsidy to Rs. 17, which was not enough, given the poor revenue realisation due to depressed sugar prices and lack of a rational cane pricing policy in the State.

### **Differential treatment**

Private millers said they had been given ‘short shift’ in comparison to sugar cooperatives, which had been given assistance at the rate of Rs. 69/quintal. A Rs. 400-crore provision had been made for cooperative mills earlier this year with an additional assistance of Rs. 200 crore being promised recently, they added. “The question to be answered is if the cooperative mills have supposedly lost Rs. 69/quintal of cane, how can the losses of private mills be assumed to be just Rs. 17,” the UP Sugar Mills Association (UPSMA) said in a statement. It questioned the rationale behind providing 23 cooperative mills procuring 695 lakh quintals of cane with help worth Rs. 600 crore, while aiding 95 private mills purchasing 6,271 lakh quintals with Rs. 375 crore. “Considering the concessions of Rs. 11/quintal of cane earlier, the cooperative mills will get a total financial assistance of Rs. 98/quintal,” the statement added. Cane price in UP are the highest in the country at Rs. 280/quintal, much higher than Central Government set ‘fair and remunerative price’ (FRP) — the minimum price that can be paid to cane farmers — of Rs. 220. The State’s private millers maintain that they would not be able to pay the dues at the prevailing rates and have threatened to stop crushing operations for the season that begins on October 1. “UP sugar mills have been making huge financial losses for many years. This

announcement of Rs.6 of cane is grossly inadequate and doesn't address the problems of the mills," said a senior UP sugar industry official. UP, the second largest cane producer in the country after Maharashtra, is home to 119 sugar mills, of which 96 are in the private sector, with over 40 lakh farmers directly engaged in cane cultivation.

### **Electronic trading in oilseeds helps boost volume growth**

After foodgrains, oilseeds play an important role in Indian economy. Oilseed crops are important cash crops as they are a source of foreign exchange and raw material to many industries. They can be used in crop rotation along with pulses. While edible oils form an important part of the human diet, oilseed cakes are used to feed cattle. Nine oilseeds are cultivated in the country and the major edible oilseeds are groundnut, rapeseed, sesamum, nigerseed, safflower, sunflower and soyabean whereas the other two non-edible oilseeds are linseed and castor seed. India's share in global production usually ranges from 7-8 per cent. But the area under oilseeds cultivation has increased over time with production increasing by more than five per cent with each year registering a growth of more than one per cent.

### **Productivity low**

But the productivity is still low when compared to other oilseeds producing countries in the world. The main cause is low cultivation of oilseeds on account of switchover to other profitable crops and dependence on rainfall rather than on irrigation. Due to lower production, India imports pulses and oilseeds and also a significant portion of edible oil. To reduce dependency on imports and attain self-sufficiency, the Government has been striving with different action plans. Oilseeds are renewable resources largely affected by weather conditions, crop production cycle and ongoing changes and fluctuation in global supplies and shifts in the markets. Usually every oilseed has its own demand-supply dynamics and a consequent change in demand-supply situation creates a trading and investment opportunity. Indian oilseeds are also influenced by global market sentiments. While all the oilseeds trade independently, as they are used in same food applications, they end up competing in the market with each other.

### **Commodity bourses**

Oilseeds are usually crushed to extract oil and meal. They are traded on the physical market and also on the futures markets. The physical market mainly

comprises plants which procure oilseeds to crush, whereas the futures market consists of number of players as per their needs. Oilseeds are actively traded in a number of commodity exchanges. These exchanges play an important part as they safeguard the interest of farmers, stockists, exporters and others involved in the trading by providing a hedging platform in order to minimise risk of wide price fluctuations. These exchanges offer a complete basket of oil and oilseeds to trade and have been successful in building strong participation on account of liquidity and efficient price discovery mechanism. Electronic trading

Among the nine oilseeds produced in India, futures electronic trading is available in rapeseed, soyabean and castorseed. Soya oil and crude palm oil are also actively traded. Due to availability of electronic trading of oilseeds products, the commodity futures have seen some phenomenal growth in trading volume and interest. Oilseed trading in India has managed to make a prominent presence in the industry wherein the trading intercedes between buyers and sellers and facilitates decision related to storage and consumption thereby providing the much-needed liquidity and providing the investors to capitalise on opportunities. The trading market usually has various participants like hedgers, speculators and arbitrageurs. Hedgers play an important role in oilseeds trading as they are the participants who have the underlying risk of a commodity as they produce, consume or import and export. Hence oilseeds trading is an essential tool for traders and exporters, in order to protect themselves against price fluctuations.

## THE ECONOMIC TIMES

### **West Bengal tops in production of cut flowers**

West Bengal topped the production of cut flowers with over 250 crore of them across India, clocking the highest compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 597 per cent between 2007 and '08 and 2011-12, according to a recently concluded study by apex industry body Assocham. "West Bengal has also emerged number one with the highest share of about 34 per cent in production of over 740 crore cut flowers throughout the country as of financial year 2011-12. Production of cut flowers in India is growing at a CAGR of over 14 per cent," according to the study titled 'Value addition to rural economy: The promise of floriculture.' "Festivals, weddings, large-scale political functions and other special occasions are driving demand for cut flowers as they are

mostly used for decorative purposes, as gifts/bouquets for formal events," said DS Rawat, national secretary general of Assocham, while releasing the findings of the chamber's study. "Though the initial investment is very high, flower production gives much higher returns than traditional crops. However, one has to wait for four to five years for breakeven," Rawat said. West Bengal is ranked eighth in terms of production of loose flowers, with the state producing about 64,000 tonne loose flowers, clocking a CAGR of over 7 per cent during the period mentioned. However, the area under flower production in West Bengal has shrunk from about 27,000 hectares in 2007-08 to 9.4 per cent in 2011-12. It is estimated that about two lakh people are involved in cut flower production in the state which enjoys diverse agro-climatic conditions suitable for flower production. Dedicated cold storage facilities for flowers near the main production centres would give a boost to flower exports from West Bengal, besides promotion of bio-technology, especially tissue culture and genetic engineering, noted the Assocham study.



### **August showers help narrow rain shortfall in Gujarat**

Though August had only a few rainy days this year, the spells were enough to help Gujarat cross the last two years record as far as the month's figure is concerned. The state recorded 200mm of rain in August this year which was 190mm in 2013 and 174mm in 2012. In the past three days, the state received 60mm of rain. The recent downpours helped the state in narrowing the rain deficit. As on 8am on September 1, the state had received 546mm of rain against the total average annual rainfall of 797mm. As on August 28, 43 talukas had received less than 250mm of rain while on September 1, this number was only 23. Officials said that Porbandar district had received 104% rain followed by 99% in Junagadh and 95% in Gir-Somnath district. The officials said that the heavy rain in South Gujarat and other parts of the state had led to increase in water levels in dams by around 216 million cubic metre. The water in the dams, which was 57% on Sunday, increased to 59% on Monday. Narmada dam had 97% water.

### **Perishing coconut crop worries farmers in Madurai district**

Drought conditions in the last three years has taken a heavy toll on the coconut crop in the district and according to a survey taken by the agricultural department a total of 2,84,771 coconut trees perished in the district during this period. As per statistics available with the department, Madurai district had 8,43,652 coconut trees spread across all 10 blocks especially in Melur, Vadipatti, Alanganallur areas which are rich in ground water. But erratic rainfall in the last three years depleted the water sources and farmers could not save the trees even with well irrigation. Hence, almost one fourth of the crop perished. M Gopalakrishnan of Sambiranipatti in Melur said he lost nearly 50 coconut trees in his farm each of which is around 20 years old. "Coconut is a long-time crop and it will take at least five years for a tree to start yielding nuts. It starts yielding well only after the seventh year. Even if we start raising saplings now, it will take at least 10 years to match the loss in production," he pointed out. However, water condition has to improve in the meantime. "Each coconut tree may consume 80 to 100 litres per day for handsome yield. It will be difficult to raise coconut crop if there are no adequate monsoons in the coming years," he added. G Selvakumar, a wholesale coconut merchant in Madurai said that drought in the last three years and power crisis crippled farmers to tap ground water sources and thus destroying a generation of coconut crop in the district. "Within this three-year period, coconut prices have doubled and tripled and there is no supply. Situation is the same across the state except Kanyakumari district but most of the produce from that district is exported to Gulf countries," he said. A bigger size coconut which was priced Rs 12 three years ago is sold at Rs 40 and there is no hope that prices will fall, he said. Agricultural officials said the compiled report will be sent to state government seeking compensation. The farmers may be either provided with monetary relief or helped in re-planting coconut saplings in their fields. Jayasingh Gnanadurai, joint director of agriculture said the state government will take the final call in this regard. Initially, they have enumerated 1,37,756 trees perished due to drought till last year. Based on request from farmers, they undertook another survey which added up to 1,47,015 trees. Altogether 2,84,771 trees perished in Madurai district, he said. Similarly, the department has also taken a list of mango trees. "We should have sent the report by now but farmers requested some more time stating that few more areas were not covered. We will be sending the report to the state government in a couple of days," Gnanadurai added.

8,43,652 trees spread across 10 blocks in district

2,84,771 trees perished during the last three years

1,37,756 trees perished due to drought till last year

Each tree consumes about 100 litres per day for handsome yield

A coconut which was priced Rs 12 three years ago is sold at Rs 40

# DECCAN Chronicle

## **Rains cheer farmers before kar harvest**

Tirunelveli district farmers who started the Kar season paddy cultivation around a month ago, are cheerful about getting water at least in the period prior to the harvest due to continuous downpours in the catchment areas of all major reservoirs in the district for the last one week. The kar season cultivation, the first crop season every year that usually commences in the first week of June, was delayed for more than a month due to the precarious storage levels in the dams. According to farmer Ganesan of Kurichi village near Tirunelveli, instead of encouraging farmers to commence seasonal cultivation, officials frightened them saying that government would not provide any risk compensation if crops grown were damaged due to drought. This attitude of government officials resulted in more than half of the total paddy cultivating land remaining barren during this kar season. Farmers also blamed the government machinery for delaying water release from dams. Bahirathan, a farmer of Pappakudi village in Tirunelveli district said, "Government released water from the Papanasam dam for kar season cultivation on July 5 instead of the usual practice of releasing water in the first week of June when the first crop season of the year starts." Despite these odds, farmers started paddy cultivation over more than 30,000 acres this year, and are now hopeful of water as the continuous rains in the catchment areas of almost all major reservoirs in the district during the last one week have raised water levels in the dams. As on Monday morning, Papanasam dam registered 5 mm of rain and had an inflow of 3231.94 cusecs that resulted in an increased water level at the dam by 3.40 ft. Around 1005 cusecs of water for drinking and irrigation in Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts has been discharged from the Papanasam dam since Monday. Around 45 cusecs has been discharged from the Manimutharu dam that had an inflow



of 190 cusecs. Against the water inflow of 386 cusecs, around 105 cusecs from the Kadanathi dam has been released for irrigation. Water discharge for irrigation from the Ramanathi dam was 40 cusecs on Monday, while around 10 cusecs each was released for irrigation from the minor reservoirs of the Karuppanathi dam, Guntaru dam and Adavinainar dam.