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# THE HINDU

## Bountiful harvest of organic vegetables



A tractor load of organic vegetables, harvested from the Government Agriculture Farm at Anchal, being taken for sale; (right) district panchayat president S. Jayamohan taking a look at the organically grown vegetable crops of the farm during his visit there on Monday



*People are making a beeline for the counter at the government farm in Anchal*

More than 10 tonnes of organically-grown vegetables have been harvested from the 100-acre Government Agriculture Farm, Anchal, during the last one month.

Farm superintendent, T.A. Kalpana, said that the crops can easily be harvested for another 90 days.

## **Selling well**

In view of the campaign against vegetables with high pesticide residue gaining momentum, the vegetables harvested from the farm are selling like hotcakes.

People are making a beeline to the vegetable counter at the farm and the district panchayat headquarters here.

In one month, long beans and bitter gourd worth Rs. 70,000 each was sold from the farm. The vegetables from the farm are sold at prices much lower than that of the same ones in the open markets coming from neighbouring states.

It was as part of the efforts to provide organic vegetables to the people of Kollam this Onam that the district panchayat in association with the agriculture department earmarked 100 acres for the purpose.

The seeds for 10 different vegetables were sown during mid-May.

District panchayat president, S. Jayamohan, who visited the farm on Monday, said that favourable climatic conditions this year after the seeds were sown helped the crops a lot.

He said that in addition to organic vegetables sold at lower prices, the farm is also making a strong market intervention in price control during the Onam season.

At the farm counter, the vegetables are sold separately. But the counter at the district panchayat headquarters they are sold in kits comprising eight vegetables of 500 grams each at the rate of Rs. 110 per kit. The vegetables are cucumber, snake gourds, bitter gourds, long beans, ladies finger, pumpkin, ivy gourds and bottle gourd.

Mr. Jayamohan said that crops of more vegetable varieties banana varieties and tuber crops are also getting ready for harvest.

While congratulating the farm staff and workers led by Ms. Kalpana for their efforts behind the success of the vegetable crops, Mr. Jayamohan said that the farm has also put more people in the district into a mood to grow and consume organic vegetables.

## **Subsidy to farmers for buying mechanised farm equipment**

Mechanised farm equipment such as paddy transplantation and sowing machines will be given to the farmers on subsidised rates by the Department of Agriculture Engineering, said a release.

The release said that the paddy transplantation and sowing machine with four rows and eight rows and above will be given to small and marginal farmers at fifty per cent subsidy and for others, the subsidy would be 40 per cent.

For buying paddy transplantation machines with four rows, eight rows and above, 50 per cent subsidy will be given to women and Adi Dravidars or maximum amount of Rs. 2 lakh and for others it would be 40 per cent or a maximum of Rs. 2 lakh.

For paddy sowing machine, the subsidy for women and Adi Dravidars will be 50 per cent or maximum of Rs. 44,000 and 40 per cent for others or maximum of Rs. 35,000 will be given as subsidy.

Interested farmers from Agasteeswaram and Thovalai taluks are advised to contact Assistant Executive Engineer (Agriculture Engineering), 833, Industrial Estate, Konam, Nagercoil and Assistant Executive Engineer (Agriculture Engineering), 22/31A, Mettukkadai, near Mosque, Thuckalay, the release added.

## **Mallapur villagers make things happen**



### ***80 tribals join hands to repair the connecting road in just a couple of hours***

Instead of waiting for things to happen, the Adivasi villagers of Mallapur in Indervelli mandal got down to making things happen. They made the difficult looking task of repairing road look so easy as 80 of them got down to obliterating dangerous potholes on the connecting road in just a couple of hours.

About 80 tribal individuals, one each from a family, joined the effort to repair the road. The decision to repair the road, on their own, was taken by the village development committee.

The Project Officer, Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA), Utnoor, R.V. Karnan who has adopted Tejapur gram panchayat of which Mallapur is a constituent village, was all praise for the effort. He even contributed his mite by digging gravel and spreading it on the road during his visit to the village as part of Grama Jyothi programme on Tuesday.

Visiting agricultural fields in Mallapur, the Project Officer assured the tribal farmers of purchasing the indigenous variety of maize and minor millets which they have cultivated during

the season. “This was part of the action plan devised to make Mallapur a seed bank for indigenous variety crops,” he said.

The ITDA has already purchased about 200 kg of millet seeds from the village. “These have been distributed among Adivasi farmers in Wankidi mandal under the Centrally sponsored Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana,” Mr. Karnan pointed out.

“We will pay you more than the market price,” the Project Officer said while inquiring about the market rate of regular hybrid variety of millets and other food grains. He said payments will be made through the special committee on agriculture formed in the village under the Grama Jyothi programme.

Earlier, Mr. Karnan exhorted the villagers to go in for planting more number of custard apple trees under the Telanganaku Haritha Haram programme. He said the fruits fetched good price in the open market to bring in healthy income for the farmers.

## **Kolar organic farmer honoured**

N.R. Chandrashekhar, an organic farmer of Nenamanahalli in Kolar taluk, has been presented the Aryabhata award by Aryabhata Cultural Association of Bengaluru.

The former Governor of Jharkhand and Bihar M. Rama Jois and Additional Director-General of Doordarshan Mahesh Joshi were among those present at the award presentation function held recently, a press release said.

## **Safe-to-eat vegetables for Onam**



Elamaram Kareem, MLA, looks at organic vegetables at an outlet at a co-operative bank in Kozhikode on Tuesday. -Photo: S. Ramesh Kurup

The Calicut Town Service Cooperative Bank has joined hands with the District Organic Vegetable Producers Forum to make safe-to-eat vegetables available to people during the Onam season.

Trade union leader and Beypore MLA Elamaram Kareem opened the vegetable outlet started as part of the initiative at the Town Bank Tower on AG Road here on Tuesday.

The outlet that markets different varieties of vegetables collected from small groups of organic farmers from in and outside the State is only one among several initiatives started by the bank to promote cultivation of safe-to-eat vegetables, said K.P. Aboobacker, one of the directors of the bank.

“Though the outlet is initially aimed at the Onam season, we have plans to make it a permanent setup,” he said.

Besides local varieties of cucumber, pumpkin and ash guard, the fair also has all the key ingredients for sambar, including drumstick, okra, and cowpea on display. “In addition to ensuring certification for the produces, we have also decided to periodically visit the fields, where the produces are harvested from,” said Mr. Aboobacker.

The bank is also planning to expand their vegetable outlets to other parts of the district once the availability of the vegetable is ensured.

The outlet at the Town Bank Tower will close on August 27.

## Naidu lays stone for ultra mega food park in Kurnool district

### CM ON FOUNDATION LAYING SPREE

- Mega food park at Thangadancha
- Mega industrial hub at **Pudlcherla**
- Maize processing unit by **Ambuja**
- Drip and sprinkler manufacturing unit at **Thangadancha**
- Also a couple of integrated steel plants, solar power plant

In a step towards ushering in industrial growth in Kurnool district, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu laid the foundation-stone for Kurnool ultra mega food park at

Thangadancha in Jupadu Bungalow mandal and Orvakal mega industrial hub at Pudicherla in Orvakal mandal on Monday.

Promising to spur industrial growth and provide necessary infrastructure in the district, he called upon leaders and people to create a congenial and peaceful atmosphere by shedding factionalism and rowdiness and fleecing of industrialists.

Mr. Naidu also laid the foundation-stone for a Rs. 240-crore maize processing unit by Gujarat Ambuja Exports Limited, Rs. 600-crore Jain Irrigation Systems drip and sprinkler manufacturing unit at Thangadancha.

He also laid foundation stones for an integrated steel plant to be established with an outlay of Rs. 1,000 crore by MPL Mineral Processing Private Ltd., a Rs. 3,000-crore modern integrated steel plant by Jai Raj Ispat Ltd., a Rs. 700 crore solar power plant and Rs. 120-crore solar structural fabrication and galvanising unit by Welspun Renewables Energy Private Ltd. at Pudicherla.

Promising to ensure speedy clearances, Mr. Naidu told the chairmen of the companies to establish the units expeditiously and engage local engineering graduates and other skilled employees. The Chief Minister said his government had sanctioned IIIT, wind and solar hub, railway midland coach factory, Nuclear Fuel Complex and Defence Research Development Organisation units, a cattle research centre at Banavasi, seed production hub at Nandyal and a mining school at Dhone.

### **JV with Siemens**

The government and Siemens were jointly setting up six skill development centres in the State, including Kurnool, with an investment of Rs. 3,300 crore, the Chief Minister said.

He assured development of a tourism circuit in Kurnool district, development of eco-tourism at Srisailem and upgrading of the Kurnool general hospital into Rayalaseema Institute of Medical Sciences.

### **Textile park**

A textile park would be set up at Yemmiganur, cement hub at Kolimigundla with Ramco, Prism and Ultratech cement factories, Mr. Naidu said. Kurnool would be developed into an industrial hub with highway connectivity to Bengaluru, Chennai, Amaravathi, Krishnapatnam and Hyderabad, by laying ring roads around Kurnool.

A Bengaluru-Kurnool industrial corridor would be developed with six to eight-lane roads, besides setting up an international airport at Kurnool, he said.

He announced sanction of Rs. 50 lakh for cement concrete roads and drains and to upgrade the upper primary school at ZP high school in Pudicherla village.

## **Mechanised transplantation to be promoted**

: The Agriculture Department has planned to promote mechanised transplantation of paddy nurseries on about 10,600 hectares during this samba season. Farmers would be extended a back-ended subsidy of Rs.3000 a hectare for carrying out transplantation using transplanters under the National Agriculture Development Programme. "We expect to promote the use of mechanised transplantation in about 20 per cent of the total area covered under the samba season this year," an official said.

Paddy nurseries would be transplanted using machines in 800 hectares in Andhanallur taluk. Mat nurseries are being raised in the fields of progressive farmers in villages such as Thiruvalarsolai. The Joint Director of Agriculture R.Chandrasekaran inspected the process of raising the mat nurseries at the village on Monday. Mat nurseries would be raised in the fields of progressive farmers so as to cover 20 per cent of the paddy area in all taluks in the district, officials said. Farmers interested in availing the subsidy can register their names with the Agricultural Extension Centres or officials of the Agriculture Department. The back-ended subsidy would be credited to bank accounts of farmers concerned.

Paddy is expected to be raised on about 58,900 hectares in the district during the samba season this year. With a majority of farmers in the district unable to raise the kuruvai crop due to delayed opening of the Mettur reservoir, samba paddy cultivation is expected to be taken up in full swing.

## **From the archives - dated August 19, 1965**

Owing to shortages of several agricultural commodities, the Board of Trade has reduced the export target for the current financial year from Rs. 875 crores to Rs. 850 crores to Rs. 860 crores. At its meeting here [New Delhi], the Board felt that the export target for the Fourth Plan as a whole should not exceed Rs. 5,100 crores. Even this target, it felt, could be realised only if production programmes were adhered to and the export assistance schemes were kept on a firm stable and long-term basis. Export earnings fell by about Rs. 11 crores in the first quarter of the current year mainly due to fall in earnings from sugar and vegetable oils. However, the future prospects in respect of these and other items like H.P.S. groundnuts, cotton piecegoods and cotton textiles were considered satisfactory by the board.

### **Rocket launched from Thumba**

A Judi-Dart rocket, the fifteenth in the present series, was successfully launched at 12-40 I.S.T. from the Thumba Rocket Launching Facility near here [Trivandram]. The Test Director, Mr. H.G.S. Murthi said that both the rocket and the payload performances were satisfactory. The chaff ejected from the rocket was acquired by the ground radar two minutes after the launch at an altitude of 64 kilometres. The radar continued to track the chaff for 19 minutes more up to an altitude of 32 kilometres. Mr. Murthi said that two Nike-Apache rockets with magnetometer payload were scheduled to be launched by the end of September. The tests would be for the measurement of electron density in the ionosphere in the equatorial region.

### **Crude price cut**

India will next year save Rs. 11.5 crores in foreign exchange partly because of the price cuts effected by the Western companies in imported crude and partly because of the anticipated increase in crude output at Ankleshwar. India will save an additional Rs. 1.5 crores in foreign exchange in a single transaction with a western oil source for the supply of aviation fuel. These points have been brought out in an official statement on oil policy tabled in the Lok Sabha to-day [August 18, New Delhi]. The statement said India had arranged with the Soviet Union for the supply of substantially large quantities of kerosene and high-speed diesel oil to meet the gap between indigenous production and demand.

## School for shepherds



**COUNTING SHEEP:**Passing on traditional shepherding practices to youngstersPHOTOS: NYT





### *Fading tradition of tending sheep gets an unusual boost in Catalonia*

During the summer months, Josep Jordana, a 56-year-old sheep farmer, moves his flock from this hamlet of just a dozen residents, perched on the Catalan side of the Pyrenees, up a dirt track to graze at higher altitudes. He spends his days walking up and down the slopes in search of the lushest pastures, trying to keep his 1,300 sheep close together. Shepherding is a tough and solitary job that mountain farmers have passed on for as long as anybody here can remember — “at least seven or eight generations” in the case of Jordana’s family, he said. But, as rural communities like this one are slowly depleted, that tradition is changing.

For the past four months, Jordana, who has no children, has been teaching sheep farming to Laura Madrid, 28, who is quite an unlikely shepherd. With a master’s degree in biology, Madrid had originally planned to pursue a doctorate in her home city, Barcelona — until she decided to apply to Catalonia’s school of shepherds.

Jordana said he was still coming to terms with the idea that shepherding could be taught in a school and rewarded with a certificate delivered by the regional ministry of agriculture. “It used to be just something that you learn from your dad,” he said. Still, he acknowledged that without the arrival of people like Madrid from the cities there would soon be nobody willing to take over the ancestral shepherd’s crook, as well as to maintain rural traditions and remote communities like Aguiró.

From 1982 to 2009, the number of sheep farms in Catalonia almost halved, from 3,964 to 2,085, according to the most recent census. There are no official statistics for the number of shepherds, but fewer than a dozen now work in the mountains of Catalonia, and most of them are nearing retirement age, according to the Catalan school of shepherds.

“We’re trying to maintain a generational handover that otherwise would probably no longer take place,” said Vanesa Freixa, director of the school, which opened in 2009 and is one of four such schools across Spain.

Madrid is among 14 students who this month will complete a five-month course run by the school. The course starts with a month of classroom instruction, covering topics like nutrition and animal diseases. The students are then sent across the region to spend four months working alongside a veteran shepherd.

She argued that the school’s popularity was not so much due to Spain’s near-record unemployment as it was to people’s desire for an alternative to the hustle and bustle of urban life. Half of her applicants already have a university degree, she said.

Some shepherds certainly seem to enjoy the recognition that their profession is getting. “Until recently, the shepherd was often the idiot or the cripple in the family, the one who couldn’t do the most important farming work, but this is now a job for which you get respect,” said Armand Flaujat, who tends sheep for seven farmers during the summer months, high up in the meadows of Catalonia’s largest nature park, which are covered with snow the rest of the year.

Madrid said working alongside Jordana had helped reshape her views on education. “There are different types of knowledge, but it’s as important to know how to work in a lab as how to manage a plot of land,” she said. “I might know the name of a plant that he doesn’t know, but he clearly knows whether his sheep should eat that plant or not.”

After the training with Jordana, Madrid said she hoped to start tending sheep in another remote mountain town in October. “I guess I also enjoy the loneliness,” she said.— New York Times News Service

***Without the arrival of people from the cities there would soon be nobody willing to take over the ancestral shepherd’s crook, as well as to maintain rural traditions and remote communities***

## **Be sympathetic to farmers, banks told**

Banks should cooperate with farmers who are not in a position to repay loans owing to adverse climatic conditions, Minister for Horticulture and district in-charge Shamanur Shivashankrappa has said.

Speaking at a meeting of bankers and officers here on Tuesday, he said that the officers should be sympathetic towards farmers who had taken small amounts as loan and should not behave as recovery agents. Banks should postpone the recovery of loans for a few months to help farmers come out of this situation, the Minister said.

Deputy Commissioner S.T. Anjan Kumar advised the bankers to waive the interest on loans taken by farmers. Immediate steps should be taken to waive the interest of 11 farmers who had committed suicide and it should be ensured that loans were released for the educational needs of their children, he said.

The bankers said that most of the banks, including cooperative banks, were facing shortage of funds and the authorities had promised to write a letter to the government seeking an additional Rs. 50 crore for the district cooperative bank. But no steps had been taken, they said.

Kalyanram, representative of the Reserve Bank of India, said that a proposal had been submitted and steps would be taken after officials of the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development visit the bank to verify loan recovery percentage.

Davangere Zilla Panchayat president Jayalakshmi, Superintendent of Police M.B. Borlingaiah, and Sadashiv, Joint Director, Agriculture, were present.

## **Bennethora canal modernisation work gets final approval**



Preparations are under way for the modernisation of canals of the Bennethora Major Irrigation Project in Kalaburagi district.

Karnataka Neeravari Nigam Ltd. (KNNL) has given its final approval to a proposal to modernise the canal and distributaries network of the Bennethora Major Irrigation Project in Kalaburagi district at a cost of Rs. 172.12 crore.

The modernisation of the canal and distributaries network of the much-delayed Bennethora Major Irrigation Project, which was originally taken up as drought relief work in 1972 and is yet to be completed in all respects due to various reasons, is being taken up under Extension Rejuvenation and Modernisation. As per the original proposal approved by the government, the cost of modernisation work in the Bennethora project was put at Rs. 150 crore. After a team of senior technical personnel inspected the canals and distributaries network, the cost has gone up to Rs. 172.12 crore, taking into consideration the enormity of the work and other factors, including the increase in cost of inputs.

A KNNL document claimed that though the project was meant to store 5.29 tmcft of water and to create an irrigation potential of nearly 21,000 hectares in drought-prone Chitapur and Sedam taluks, the canal and distributaries system suffered heavy damage due to heavy rain in 2008-09 and 2009-10 and it had become impossible to release water in the damaged canals and distributaries.

When contacted, Superintending Engineer of Gulbarga Irrigation Zone Jagannath Halangi told *The Hindu* that tenders for taking up modernisation have been floated.

Mr. Halangi said that the modernisation work included the replacement of lining in the entire length of the canals and the distributaries — both right and left bank — to prevent seepage of water into the agriculture fields, reconstruction of damaged cross drainages, aqueducts and repair to road bridges.

The main intention was to streamline the irrigation system and increasing the area under irrigation through increased use of modern water management technologies and ensure flow of

water to the entire command area, and arrest seepage and leakage in the canal system. While concrete lining 50.22 km in the Left Bank Canal would cost Rs. 42.29 crore, it would cost Rs. 51.99 crore for concrete lining 62.82 km in the Right Bank Canal.

## **‘India needs smart governance more than smartphones’**



NABARD financial services chairman Aloysias P. Fernaandes addresses a function at Kerala Agricultural University in Thrissur on Tuesday.

: Aloysias P. Fernaandes, chairman, NABARD financial services, Bengaluru, has called upon the students to dream with open eyes and work hard to realise their dreams.

He was delivering the sixth talk of ‘Leadership wisdom series’ organised by the College of Cooperation, Banking and Management, of the Kerala Agricultural University, here on Tuesday. He asked the students to balance life so that individual as well as society is benefited.

“Opinion polls have shown that the young generation wants a modern India, well-governed India and a corruption-free India, but they don't cry for a poverty-free India,” he pointed out.

He asked the students to raise questions for the proper development of society.

“You should ask why the pizza delivery man reaches faster than an ambulance or a police team? Why a soldier’s martyrdom gets lower compensation than an Asian games medal? You should realise that India needs smart governance more than smartphones.

“Technology discriminates society than uniting it or improving it. So master technology, which is appropriate for you. But never allow technologies to master you,” Mr. Fernaandes said.

The orientation programme for new batch of MBA (agri-business management) was inaugurated by Paul Thomas, Managing Director, ESAF.

## Call to make researches farmer-friendly

*Sub-centre to be named after A. Abraham*



Chief Minister Oommen Chandy lays the foundation for the development sub-centre of the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute near Mala on Tuesday. — PHOTO: K.K. Najeeb

Chief Minister Oommen Chandy has called for researches that will ensure decent revenue for farmers. He was speaking after laying the foundation stone for the Rs. 125-crore development sub-centre of the Jawaharlal Nehru Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute, Kuzhoor, near Mala, on Tuesday.

“The government is taking steps to strengthen the agriculture sector with the support of scientific researches and technological development,” the Chief Minister said.

He called for researches to protect the rich biodiversity of the State. The research sub-centre will be named after Dr. A. Abraham, who took the initiative for setting up the Jawarharlal Nehru Botanical Garden in the State.

Minister for Industries P.K. Kunhalikutty, who presided over the function, stressed the need for exploring the industrial possibilities of agricultural products through research.

In a function at Guruvayur, the Chief Minister inaugurated work on the queue complex and vehicle parking facility to be built by Guruvayur Devaswom. K.V. Abdul Khader, MLA, released the document ‘Vision 2020’, a development plan prepared by the Guruvayur Devaswom for the next 15 years.

In another function, the Chief Minister handed over houses to 17 families of Kallichira Colony, who were displaced from the valley of Chimmini forest, when the Chimmini Dam was commissioned.

# Monsoon worries Moody's lowers India growth forecast to 7%

After Fitch, Moody's revises target on a 'drier than average' monsoon'; projects 7.5% growth for 2016.

Almost four months after Moody's revised India's outlook to 'positive' from 'stable' and projected a growth forecast of 7.5 per cent for 2015, the ratings agency revised its growth outlook to 7 per cent on Tuesday for the year, citing "drier than average" monsoon. However, Moody's maintained its growth forecast of 7.5 per cent for 2016 and said that India will continue to outperform its peers over the medium-term.

Earlier, in July, Fitch Ratings too had lowered its growth forecast for 2015-16 from 8 per cent to 7.8 per cent citing deficient rains and slower than expected pace of implementation of reforms. Moody's revision comes a day after the Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), while addressing the Indian Diaspora in Dubai, said that the world's perception about India has changed and all leading global agencies, including Moody's, have revised their outlook for India.

The note said, "One main risk to our forecast is that the pace of reforms slows significantly as consensus behind the need for reform weakens once the least controversial aspects of the government's plan have been implemented."

The revision comes despite the note pointing that India will benefit from fall in commodity prices and will see minimal impact of demand from China and slowdown in global trade growth. The Brent crude continues to trade weak at around \$50 per barrel.

Moody's said, "Economic activity will continue to strengthen on the back of a gradual implementation of reforms that foster domestic and foreign investment. Consumption growth will continue to be supported by large income gains as inflation has fallen to relatively low levels by the country's past standards and favourable demographics."

The downward revision of India's growth and a muted global economic projection by Moody's had an impact on the domestic markets. The Sensex declined 131 points or 0.5 per cent intra-day before recovering to close at 27,831 -a dip of 46 points or 0.2 per cent. The fall was in line with the Asian markets that slipped during the day. Shanghai Composite in China fell over 6 per cent and Hang Seng in Hong Kong fell 1.4 per cent.

"The recovery in the US and, to a lesser extent, the euro area and Japan, will be offset by the ongoing slowdown in China, low or negative growth in Latin America and only a gradual Russian recovery from its recession this year," said the report prepared by Marie Diron, senior vice president, Credit Policy.

Earlier in June, a poll conducted by Moody's global credit research showed that while the participants were optimistic about a 7.5 per cent GDP growth for India in FY16, they raised concerns over "policy stagnation" and it being the biggest risk to country's macroeconomic growth.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

**KOLHAPUR:** Sangli district, which is infamous for water scarcity and low rainfall, has reported growth in sugarcane cultivation area by 10,000 hectares. The district had 74,497 hectares of land under sugarcane cultivation in 2014-15, which has now increased to 84,966 hectares in the 2015-16 the crushing season.

According to the official district agriculture report, tehsils such as Shirala, Khanapur, Tasgaon, Kavathe-Mahankal and Kadegaon have reported significant rise in bringing more area under cultivation.

Sangli district collector Shekhar Gaikwad said irrigation facilities have increased in these tehsils since the last two years. It has helped the farmers to shift from kharif crops such as groundnut and jowar to sugarcane with more assured water supply through canals and lift irrigations, he said.

Sangli district gets low rainfall in its eight tehsils, while only two tehsils receive good showers. According to the Pune divisional commissioner's official report, as many as 31 tankers were supplying drinking water to 29 villages and 192 hamlets in the district as on August 18. Altogether 78,713 people are solely dependent on tankers for drinking water, the report stated.

Moreover, the lift irrigation projects at Tembhu, Mhaisal, Takari and Arfal have helped the farmers get more water. The district also has more than 20 co-operative and private sugar factories that are encouraging the farmers to go for sugarcane cultivation and

assuring them to crush their produce.

The last two years have been very challenging for the sugar factories over payment of sugarcane purchase price (fair and remunerative price) to the farmers because of lower demand in the wholesale and retail markets.

Meanwhile, micro irrigation schemes have been implemented only on 3.5% of the total area under sugarcane cultivation, which hints at excess use of water on the remaining fields. Sugarcane farming has always been criticised for water overuse and depriving other farmers from getting their due share.

## Onion prices touch Rs 70 mark, set to go higher

NAGPUR: Much against the prediction of traders, onion prices are spiking. The white onion, a preferred variety locally, is now being quoted at 70 per kg and even 80 in some of the shops. Standard grade of the red onion is selling at 60 per kg. The poor quality stock is fetching 45 to 50. This is equal to the level reached in summer of 2013 when onions had made headlines.

Two weeks ago, traders were expecting that the prices will recede or at least remain stable. However, all their calculations have failed. Stocks from main production centres like Nashik and Dhule are fast depleting and fresh crop is expected only in October.

This gap is usually bridged by supplies from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. So far, there were hopes that supply from the southern states may help contain prices. But the output has been low even in these states too, which has made the rates spiral.

Jaiprakash Wasani of Pankaj Traders at the Kalamna Agriculture Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) said bulk traders auctioned onions at 45 to 50 a kg on Tuesday. "The inferior quantities also fetched a price of 25 to 35 a kg. Only 10% of the supplies are of the best quality, but the overall price hike has made even the lower grades dearer," said Wasani.

Cultivation for the October crop in Nashik and Dhule has not reached the optimum levels due to the dry spell. This means there is a likelihood of the arrivals from there being delayed in the next season.

On Tuesday, only five trucks carrying onions reached Kalamna market. Markets in Hyderabad are quoting a price of 45 to 50 a kg for onion, despite its proximity to the production onion growing centres of Andhra and Karnataka. This makes it all the more possible that rates will go up further, added another trader.

"The government plans to bridge the supply gap through exports from China and Egypt, which will also cost 40 a kg, making little difference," said a representative from Afzal Trading Company at Kalamna. The Pakistani onion is being quoted at 38 a kg, but fails to meet the quality parameters, say traders.



Potatoes, which were absorbing the impact of onion prices, too got a bit costlier this week. The prices inched to 10 a kg as against 8 in the wholesale market. The retailers are selling it in the range of 12 to 16.

Ram Bagle, a trader at Gokulpeth market, said he manages to sell onions, both red and white, at 55 a kg as he can offset the loss by selling potatoes, which have a good margin these days. However, not many vendors have the white onions, indicating the shortage.

Among other vegetables, tomato prices have doubled to 40 a kg in last one week. The average rate rules at 40 a kg for any vegetable, said traders. Some veggies like ginger are cheaper by a 20 a kg at 120 and coriander is now 80 a kg as against 150 over a week ago. Among the exotic vegetables mushrooms are up by 10 at 50 a bag of 200 grams due to a supply crunch.

#### PRICE CHART

Vegetable-----current-----week ago

Onions -----60-70 ----- 50-60

Potatoes -----12-16 -----12-16

Tomatoes -----40 -----20

Ginger -----120 -----160

Coriander -----150 -----80

(Rates in Rs per kg)

## TNAU may receive Rs 750 crore boost in funding: VC

COIMBATORE: The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) is most likely to receive Rs750 crore in funds for focused research, said TNAU vice-chancellor K Ramasamy, during the university's 36th convocation on Monday here. The funding may be sanctioned in the next financial budget, indicated Ramasamy.

The university's funding for research has increased from Rs210 crore to Rs480 crore in the last four years, Ramasamy said. "As of today, 52% of the research funding comes from external agencies," he said in his annual report. Also, the university's performance in research has improved its ranking from category 'D' to 'A', based on the h-index. "TNAU is the best among all state agricultural universities in India," Ramasamy added.

Minister for housing, urban development and agriculture and the pro-chancellor of the university, R Vaithilingam presided over the graduation day ceremony. He also conferred honorary doctorate degree in science to Susan R McCouch, professor, department of plant breeding and genetics, Cornell University, USA, Pedro Medrano Rojas, former UN assistant secretary general and Ashok Bakthavathsalam, chairman and managing director, K G Information System Pvt Ltd, Coimbatore.

Susan R McCouch was also the chief guest on the occasion and delivered the graduation day address. "I congratulate all the graduates for receiving their degrees. My association with TNAU is more than two decades old, and many of my co-researchers and students have been from this university," said Susan

Her contribution towards research in rice includes the first molecular mapping of the rice genome that led to further studies in understanding traits like disease resistance, drought resistance, maturity and yield in rice. On the other hand, Pedro Medrano Rojas has been associated with United Nations since 1983, and was the programme officer of the UN's world food program (WFP) in 1989. Ashok Bakthavathsalam's contribution towards the development of IT sector in the city made the TNAU's academic council and board of management decide to confer the honorary doctorate in science to him.

A total of 1,170 candidates received their degrees, of which 111 were PhD graduates, 199 were post graduate students and 860 were under graduates. Also, 33 students were awarded gold medals for academic excellence.

## THE HINDU Business Line

### **Basmati acreage may remain at last year's levels**

Basmati acreage in India for the 2015-16 Kharif season is likely to remain the same as last year even as prices had dropped considerably to Rs.2,000-2,900/quintal in 2014-15 from as much as Rs. 4,000 the year before.

Area under basmati cultivation touched 2.1 million hectares (mh) last year and sufficient rainfall across Haryana and Punjab – which account for as much as 70 per cent of basmati output – through most of the ongoing monsoon season has resulted in consistent planting.

India produced 8.3 million tonnes of basmati rice last year.

“Acreage should be about 2 mh, the same as last year at. We don't expect a change given the good precipitation in the key basmati-growing areas and also western Uttar Pradesh which is almost completely irrigated,” said AK Singh, who heads the Genetics Division at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI).

Rajen Sundaresan, Executive Director of the All India Rice Exporters' Association, concurred and said “initial surveys indicated that acreage this Kharif would match that of last year.”

### **Early planting woes**

Singh, who was the chief breeder of the Pusa-1509 basmati variety, expected a slight decline in its coverage and an increase in area under Pusa-1121, another popular variety he helped breed and which accounted for 75-80 per cent of the \$4.79 billion earned through basmati exports in 2013-14.

In 2014-15, Pusa-1121 was planted on around one million hectare while Pusa-1509 was covered between 0.5 and 0.7 mh.

“There has been a slight change this year and 1121 will cover 1.3-1.35 mh while 1509 may slide to between 0.35 and 0.4 mh,” he said.

A reason for the decline in area under Pusa-1509 could be the high breakage levels in the grain, which prompted millers in Haryana to scale back on procurement this year. Early planting was identified as the chief cause for the breakage.

“Last year, farmers planted 1509 on a large scale by June since it had the qualities of being early maturing and flowered quickly, besides a higher yield. This year, they were asked to plant it in July so that the problem can be avoided,” said Trilochan Mohapatra, Director, Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack.

### **Exports to Iran**

With Iran unlikely to buy as much basmati rice as it did two years ago, prices could take a beating when the new crop hits the market, said analysts. “If production is consistent with last year, prices are likely to be down since Iran is not buying much rice,” said Tejinder Narang, a grains trade expert.

Exports to Iran fell to 0.93 million tonnes (mt) last year from 1.4 mt the year before, according to data provided by the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority.

## **Growers sceptical of FDI in coffee, rubber estates**



### **Bengaluru/Kochi, August 18:**

While the plantation-related stocks reacted positively to the talk of the Government considering foreign direct investment (FDI) in coffee and rubber estates, producers are sceptical of the latest move considering the experience in tea sector, where allowing 100 per cent FDI has not yielded any results, so far.

“We welcome the Government’s move to liberalise. However, considering the experience in tea sector, we are sceptical that the proposed move will unlikely help attract any foreign investments in coffee and rubber plantations as the returns are not lucrative,” said Ullas Menon, Secretary, United Planters Association of Southern India (Upasi), the apex planters body.

Further, unless the restrictions in plantation sector such as the statutory requirement of sharing the social costs of labour and land use are removed, it may not be attractive for foreign investors, Menon added.

The Government had allowed 100 per cent FDI in tea plantations way back in 2002, but the sector has hardly attracted any foreign investments.

### **Mixed reactions**

K Kurian, Chairman of the Karnataka Planters Association, said FDI may work in coffee plantations unlike in tea sector which is highly labour-intensive.

However, generating adequate returns from plantations may remain a challenge due to high capital costs as compared to other countries.

It was reported that the Commerce and Industry Ministry was considering a proposal allowing foreign players to invest in rubber and coffee plantation, engage labourers in plucking of coffee beans or collecting latex from rubber trees and processing of the raw material.

“In all probability, the government is likely to consider FDI in processing sector and this will not benefit the growers,” says Shajimon Jose, President of Chirakkara Rubber Producers Societies.

However, if the FDI covers rubber plantations, Jose said there was scope for widening the farming activities to more areas and it would benefit growers to realise better prices in future.

### **Rubber price crash**

Jose pointed out that majority of rubber growers in Kerala are reeling under the price crash that has impacted the entire sector badly.

At present the growers are getting only Rs. 114 a kg for sheet, while the latex price is hovering at Rs. 94, forcing growers to pay half the amount for tapping.

Given this scenario, Jose said rubber farming has becoming un-remunerative forcing majority of growers to shift to other farming practices.

Quoting statistics, he said rubber production has registered a 12 per cent drop in FY 15 at 6,45,000 tonnes while the consumption has gone up during the period.

The Association of Planters of Kerala was of the view the Government’s move would bring in much needed investment, technological upgradation and improved cultivation practices to the retarded plantation industry.

### **Land holdings**

However, the final aspects of implementation will hold the key in the success of this initiative, C Vinayaraghavan, Chairman, APK, said. He pointed out that 90 per cent of the land holdings under rubber are with less than an average area of two hectares and this may act as a hindrance to large scale investment, mechanisation and economies of scale.

Moreover, the ambiguities created by vested interest groups in different States on the ownership of large holdings may act as deterrent to the foreign investors. The rigid labour laws and reluctance for labour reforms could also play a spoilsport in the successful implementation of the new scheme, Vinayaraghavan added.

“Until and unless security of land and planting assets are not ensured such changes and policies will only remain on paper. The spiralling cost of production and negative margin on returns will impact this policy,” he said.

APK suggested that the Commerce Ministry should consider ease of doing plantation business in India as a precursor to the change in policy of allowing 100 per cent FDI, so that this policy will become a success and it will benefit all the stakeholders.

N Radhakrishnan, Advisor, Cochin Rubber Merchants Association, said FDI will benefit only large rubber estates who are now reeling under severe financial troubles due to price crash.

In Kerala, 90 per cent of the plantations are owned by tiny and small sector comprising around 11 lakh growers with a holding of 0.5 to 5 hectares and the FDI in the sector will not derive any benefit for them

## **Strong export buying lends flavour to cardamom prices**

### **Kochi, August 18:**

Strong export demand has helped the cardamom market to stay steady despite continued arrivals at the auctions held last week in Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

Like the previous week the total arrivals stood at around 650 tonnes whereas the arrivals at this time of the previous season were at below 200 tonnes. As the harvesting has begun early in all the plantations, there has been an upsurge in arrivals, trade sources said.

Besides, growers appear to be selling, at present, whatever volume is harvested at the prevailing prices and that in turn also led to rise in arrivals, they said.

“However, good export buying has aided the prices to stay steady despite the heavy arrivals,” PC Punnoose, General Manager, CPMC, told *BusinessLine*.

The individual auction average vacillated between Rs. 620 and Rs. 660 a kg. Exporters were reported to have bought an estimated 150 tonnes. Availability of exportable grade of 7mm and above capsules at moderate price is also attributed to the rise in export buying. Around 30 per cent of the arrivals comprised 8mm bold capsules. Hence, bulk is being sold at Rs. 625-640.

The total arrivals today at CPA auction in Bodi increased to 47.6 tonnes from 40.2 tonnes. The maximum price was at Rs. 853 a kg while the auction average slipped marginally to Rs. 615.39 from Rs. 619.17 the previous Monday.

Total arrivals during the season stood at 1,401 tonnes as on August 14 against 463 tonnes the same day last year. Sales were at 1,386 tonnes and 452 tonnes respectively. The auction average as on August 14, 2015 was at Rs. 664.65 a kg where as, it was at Rs. 843.09 a kg as on August 16, 2014.

Prices of graded varieties ( Rs. /kg): 8mm bold good colour 880-950; 7-8 mm 730-750; 6-7 mm 610-630; below 6 mm: 580-600.