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# THE HINDU

## Union government sanctions schemes under RKVY for State



The Union government has cleared projects worth Rs. 1,089.63 crore under the Rashtriya Krishi Vikasa Yojane (RKVY) for the current year and sanctioned an interim allocation of Rs. 322.83 crore immediately.

Official sources told *The Hindu* on Thursday that the RKVY was being implemented on a cost-sharing basis by the Union and State governments and the Union government had released Rs. 161.42 crore as its share in the interim allocation.

Of the Central share received, the State government has released Rs. 5.5 crore for the implementation of a fodder development scheme to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

### Separate order

Sources said that in a separate order, the State government had released Rs. 155.92 crore from the first instalment released by the Union government for the project. Strict instruction has been given to the implementing agencies that they ensure that the funds released is utilised during the current year for the projects approved at the State-level sanctioning committee.

### Approval given

Sources said that the committee and the Union government had given their approval for taking up various projects by the departments of Agriculture, Horticulture, Fisheries and Sericulture; the University of Agriculture Sciences at Bengaluru, Dharwad, and Raichur; the University of Agriculture and Horticulture Sciences at Shivamogga; the University of Horticulture Sciences at Bagalkot; the Karnataka State Seeds Corporation, the Karnataka State Warehousing Corporation, the Karnataka Compost Development Corporation, the Karnataka State Agricultural Produce Processing and Export Corporation, the Karnataka State Seed and Organic Certification Agency and others.

## **Distribution**

While Rs. 350.24 crore has been sanctioned to the Agriculture Department, Rs. 100 crore has been sanctioned to the Horticulture Department. The Animal Husbandry Department has been sanctioned Rs. 165 Crore. University of Horticultural Sciences at Bagalkote has been sanctioned Rs. 2.5 crore for taking up two projects, according to the sources.

The University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad has been sanctioned four projects to be taken up at an estimated cost of Rs 4 crore. The University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur, has been sanctioned Rs. 3 crore for taking up five projects. University of Agriculture and Horticulture Sciences, Shivamogga, has been sanctioned Rs. 3.5 crore for taking up three projects.

## **Marketing Department**

The Agriculture Marketing Department has been sanctioned Rs. 236 crore for taking up different projects. The Department of Fisheries has been sanctioned Rs. 10 Crore. UAS Bengaluru has been sanctioned Rs 2.5 crore for taking up two projects. The State Warehousing Corporation has been sanctioned Rs. 150 crore for taking up construction of scientific warehouses for storage of agriculture produce under post harvest management.

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*Rs. 1,089.63 crore*

*· They are being implemented on a cost-sharing basis and the Centre has released*

*Rs. 161.42 crore as interim allocation*

*· Implementing agencies directed to utilise the entire grants within the current fiscal*

*University of Agriculture and Horticulture Sciences Shivamogga has been sanctioned Rs. 3.5 crore for taking up three projects*

## **Krishi Mela from today**

Basavalinga Pattaddevaru, seer of the Bhalki Hire Mutt, will inaugurate the Krishi Mela in the Krishi Vigyan Kendra in Bidar on December 11.

Experts in agriculture, horticulture, veterinary and fisheries will interact with farmers. Advanced farming techniques and farm machinery will be on display, said a release.

## **Wayanad to take to grafting for cultivation of vegetables**

*With new technology, district aims to become vegetable bowl of the State*



A tomato plant grafted on a 28-day-old Anachunda (*Solanum torvum*) root stock.

Though the topography and climate in Wayanad is suitable for cultivating different types of vegetables, climatic vagaries over the recent years and various diseases affecting the plants have kept farmers away from tapping the commercial potential of vegetable production.

The Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), Wayanad, has come out with an innovative technology of grafting in vegetable seedlings to tackle the issues related to vegetable cultivation to a certain extent.

“We have already launched a project to make the district the vegetable hub of the State, and the new technology will help attain our goal,” K. Asha, Deputy Director, ATMA, said. “Under the project we are planning to make Wayanad — a region where agriculture crops suffer damage during rainy season — an ideal place for commercial vegetable cultivation through grafting technology,” she added.

The organisation will propagate the idea of grafting in vegetables, a technique initiated by Narayanankutty, professor at the Agricultural Research Station, Mannuthy, among the farming community.

The concept of grafting *anachunda* (*Solanum torvum*) and bottle gourd (*Lagenaria siceraria*) as rootstock to high yielding solanaceous and cucurbitaceae vegetables make the plants more tolerant to drought and water logging and less prone to bacterial wilt disease, Anil Zachariah, deputy project director, ATMA Wayanad, told *The Hindu* .

It was identified that *anachunda* was a better rootstock for high-yielding solanaceous vegetable varieties such as tomato, brinjal and chilli, while bottle gourd was suitable for cucurbitaceae vegetables such as pumpkin, bitter melon, cucumber, snake melon, ivy melon and ash melon, Dr. Anil said.

ATMA would organise a series of training programmes on grafting for farmers and the first such a programme would be held at Woodland Hotel Auditorium on Friday, he added.

### **Campaign to save campus green**

*Teachers and students of Agricultural College in Madurai join hands to save neem trees*



**END OF LORANTHUS:**A worker applies copper oxychloride to the end of a neem tree branch cut using a saw to protect it from Loranthus, a parasitic weed, in the Save Neem Tree campaign at Agricultural College and Research Institute in Madurai on Thursday.— Photo: R. Ashok

The death of neem trees on the verdant campus of Agricultural College and Research Institute (ACRI) here was a cause of concern till recently. In a coordinated effort to protect the greenery at the foot of Yanaimalai hillock, the college has launched a 'Save Neem Tree' campaign, involving teachers, students and research scholars.

After it was found that Loranthus, a mistletoe, called 'pulluruvi' in Tamil, was surviving on neem trees, the campaign was launched to remove the partial stem parasitic weed using a pruner-cum-harvester got from Anbil Dharmalingam Agricultural College and Research Centre, Tiruchi, said K. Velayudham, Dean.

Explaining the impact of Loranthus on trees, M. Kalyanasundaram, Head, Agricultural Entomology, said that the parasite infested on neem, mango, sapota, guava and great Indian gooseberry trees. "Its seeds are sticky and tasty and birds spread them through their excreta," he said. In the case of ACRI, which has about 5,000 neem trees, Loranthus seeds are spread by peacocks.

According to N. O. Gopal, Head, Department of Agricultural Microbiology, whose department undertook the campaign on Thursday, Loranthus grew strongly on the branches and stole minerals and water from the tree, besides blocking sunlight. The parasitic nature of Loranthus results in the death of the host tree.

Dr. Velayudham said that the campaign, being undertaken on Thursdays in turns by each department, involved cutting of the infected tree branches using a mechanical saw and application of copper oxychloride to the cut ends to prevent the spread of fungal infection. The ACRI, for the first time, has also identified seven insects as natural enemies of Loranthus. They are also used simultaneously to prevent the growth of the parasite. The common Jezebel butterfly, which lays 280 to 300 eggs, is used in the battle against Loranthus as its larvae feed on the parasite. "The use of insects provides good scope for bio-control of the parasite," said Dr. Kalyanasundaram.

The 'Save Neem Tree' campaign has not only saved about 1,500 trees so far but also prevented the spread of Loranthus outside the campus. The ACRI will also help farmers in overcoming the Loranthus menace.

## **Paddy crop inundated**

*Crop on one lakh hectares of land under water in Nagapattinam district*

Thousands of hectares of standing samba and thaladi paddy crop continue to remain inundated after heavy rains pounded several parts of Nagapattinam and Tiruvarur districts on Tuesday. However, there was a let-up in the rain in the delta region on Wednesday.

Vedaranyam recorded the maximum of 21 cm of rainfall in the delta during the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 a.m. on Wednesday, inundating large swathes of paddy fields. On Wednesday, Minister for Food R. Kamaraj accompanied by Collector M. Mathivanan inspected the inundated fields of Kurichi panchayat in Kottur union and ascertained from Agriculture Department the extent of damage.

## **Environmentalists want status quo on Kolleru**

The Prof. Raman Sukumar Committee's visit to Kolleru Lake has the environmentalists on tenterhooks. The panel interacted with Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu and made an aerial survey of the lake and surroundings on Wednesday and met forest department and other key officials on Thursday.

Environmentalists feel that anything less than a *status quo* will open the flood gates for the encroachment of the lake and sanctuary area.

While the environmentalists are hoping that the committee members who are all pro-environment would not suggest the downsizing of the Kolleru Wildlife Sanctuary from contour +5 to +3, they are worried that they would recommend that the 14,861 acres of private patta land be given to the patta holders as the government was not in a position to pay the promised compensation.

Environmentalist T. Pathanjali Sastry who has filed a contempt petition against the Government of Andhra Pradesh in the Supreme Court, told *The Hindu* that the issue was still *sub judice* and both the State and Central Government would have to answer to the Supreme Court, if they went ahead with the proposal to downsize the Kolleru Sanctuary from contour +5 to +3.

Another activist B V Seshagiri Rao said while according to the law the patta holders had the right to only practice agriculture, in reality they would take up the more profitable aquaculture.

The creation of fish tanks would lead to the creation of dedicated channels and roads and this would cause the free flow of water in the lake.

“Water naturally flows from all around to the lake because it was below sea level. When there is heavy rain the lake absorbs the flood, but the formation of fish tanks would cause obstruction to the flow of water.

“When the lake cannot take the water discharged by Budamerru rivulet areas of Vijayawada will be flooded. Similarly when Yerrakalava is in spate Eluru Town gets flooded,” Prof Seshagiri Rao said.

*Anything less than status quo will open flood gates for the encroachment of the lake and sanctuary area, they say*

### **RARS to encourage farmers to grow apple**

After successfully growing apple trees on its extension farm, the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) at Chintapalle will encourage farmers in growing the trees in the high-altitude areas of the Agency in the district. The RARS will identify farmers in association with the Horticulture Research Station at Chintapalle.

“The CCMB, which identified the high-altitude areas as suitable for growing apple, has proposed that saplings be distributed among farmers,” Associate Director of Research of RARS at Chintapalle B. Padmodaya told *The Hindu* .

CCMB scientist A.V. Rao had spoken to Dr. Padmodaya about associating farmers in the exercise. “The proposal is yet to be approved by the government,” he said.

The RARS had planted 60 apple grafts provided by the CCMB in January 2014. They were procured from Solan in Himachal Pradesh. The varieties were Anna, Michael, and Selection.

The Anna and Michael varieties had flowered in March and finally bore six apples, Dr. Padmodaya said. That indicated the possibility of growing the trees here, he said.

The trees are now ready for defoliation and flowering will begin in March. Fruit-bearing is likely to occur in five to six months, by August.

## **Sowing of Rabi crop gains momentum in Chhattisgarh**

Sowing of Rabi crops is in full swing in Chhattisgarh and so far nearly 43 per cent of the activity has been completed.

“The farmers have completed sowing of Rabi crops on around 7.38 lakh hectares of land against the proposed target of 17 lakh hectares in the State,” Agriculture Minister Brijmohan Agrawal said here on Thursday.

Sowing of food grain crops, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables on nearly 17 lakh hectares is the priority, he said.

“So far, wheat has been sown on nearly 50,000 hectares against the proposed target of sowing on 1.60 lakh hectares in this season,” the Minister said.

Sowing of corn on 11,140 hectares and that of barley and other crops on 4,013 hectares has been completed, Mr. Agrawal said.

The department is gearing up to sow pulses on 8.75 lakh hectares.

On nearly 4.70 lakh hectares sowing of pulses has been completed, he said.

Besides, the department has proposed sowing of oilseed crops on 2.75 lakh hectares in Rabi season 2015-16.

So far, sowing of alsin, mustard, toriya, til, sunflower, kusum, peanut, and other oilseed crops on 1.17 lakh hectares has been completed, Mr. Agrawal added.

Vegetables have been cultivated on 77,830 hectares and there is a target of planting sugarcane on 30,000 hectares area in this season, he added.

PTI

## **People responsible for climate change: environment activist**

Pushpanath says such drastic change in climate would badly affect agriculture.— Photo: M.Sathyamoorthy

Environment activist Pushpanath Krishnamoorthi said that the recent heavy rain in Chennai and nearby districts was a result of climate change that was induced by people.



He told reporters in The Nilgiris on Thursday that such drastic change in climate would badly affect agriculture.

Expressing the need to create better awareness on climate change, he also stressed on the importance of fair trade.

### **Awareness walk**

He said that these were the purposes of his 450-km-long awareness walk from Puducherry to Kotagiri. Mr. Pushpanath said that farmers and tribals should be able to produce organically and should also get a good price for their produce.

### **Paddy crop under threat in Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur districts**

*CPI(M) MLA says crop on 75,000 hectares of land under threat*



Rainwater stagnating on a paddy field at Kattimedu near Thiruthuraipoondi in Tiruvarur district.

The skies opened up over Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam district when the downpour measured 21.8 cm in 24 hours on Wednesday and the Valavanaaru drainage carrier breached in the neighbouring Tiruvarur district. And a good 24 hours later officials and public were still labouring on Thursday to drain the flooded areas in Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam districts. Relief, if not to the fullest satisfaction, arrived but that is not primary on the agenda of the affected people and adequate compensation is the word on everybody's lips.

Although Nagapattinam district is prone to heavy flooding in any monsoon, the torrent inundated several more thousands of acres of paddy

crop, water logged numerous highway stretches, and pushed hundreds out of their modest houses. Motorists on the Highway 63 linking Tiruthuraipoondi and Voimedu encountered veritable jungle streams in several places as the flood waters rose from the Mulliyaru to sweep across the road northwards and inundate the primed samba paddy to the dismay of the farmers.

Hundreds of displaced villagers of Vandal, Kundrooranveli, Pazhayatrankarai, Lingathadi, and Muneeswaran Koviladi were sheltered in makeshift relief camps and provided food. “Our samba paddy crop in hundreds of acres is under water for the past 10 days. Even if water recedes soon, the prospects of a decent harvest is simply out of the way as we could hope to reap only chaff,” says the former president of Talaignayar Town Panchayat P. Rajendran.

“We first we raised paddy through direct sowing during Aadi-Aavani (August/September) and the tender crops got smoked out under extreme hot conditions. Undaunted, we went for second direct sowing in Purattasi (October) and now that has got drowned in the northeast monsoon rains,” says K. Moorthy of Oradiyampulam in the worst hit Nagapattinam district. Harvest-ready paddy crop on more than 500 acres of land in the nearby areas such as Aayanoor, Vadugoor and Vaattakudi has been devastated.

“We feel the damage is to more than 75,000 hectares and all of them must be declared damaged and farmers compensated accordingly as they could not hope to salvage anything from crops inundated for more than a fortnight,” says CPI MLA from Tiruthuraipoondi K. Ulaganathan.

### **Release water from Muttal tank: farmers**

The farmers of Attur, and its surrounding areas have urged the district authorities to order the release of water from the Muttal tank in Kallantham village for irrigation purpose.

The Muttal Lake got filled up recently in the heavy rain. This tank is the main source of drinking water for Attur, Ammampalayam, Kallantham, Thulukkanur towns and its surrounding areas. The drinking water is supplied from the big wells dug in the vicinity of this lake.

### **Irrigation**

This lake provided irrigation facility to about 400 acres in the Ammampalayam, Kallantham and Thulukkanur and surrounding villages.

Paddy, tapioca, coconut, turmeric, makkacholam are the main crops of this area.

The release of water from Mettur Dam under the canal scheme has solved the drinking water problem of Attur town and its surrounding villages to a big extent.

As such the farmers have demanded the release of water for cultivation activities and have presented a petition to the District Collector V. Sampath recently.

S. Govindarajan, president of the Maravalli – Makkacholam Farmers Association, Attur, told *The Hinduthat* despite various parts of the district receiving widespread rainfall, Attur town and the surrounding areas continued to remain dry.

Now, the overflowing the Muttal Lake has helped in increasing the ground water level in the area.

But water is going waste into the River Vasishtanadhi.

The release of water by opening the sluices will immensely benefit the farming community and the standing crops.

Besides, it will also help in recharging about 500 farm wells, which will enable in raising fodder etc for the cattle during the summer months, Mr. Govindarajan said.

### **Over 400 NGOs oppose ‘new non-trade issues’ at WTO talks**

Members of 453 civil society groups from over 150 countries have asked the World Trade Organisation (WTO) member countries to forestall — what they termed — the “corporate and rich country-government agenda” of permanently abandoning the ‘development’ mandate of the Doha Round negotiations, and replacing it with a set of ‘new non-trade issues’ at the global trade body’s coming Nairobi meet.

The Nairobi ministerial conference — on the Doha Round negotiations meant to liberalise world trade — will be a failure from a development perspective if ‘new issues’ (such as environment, labour, e-commerce, global value chains, investment, competition policy and transparency in government procurement), are agreed to as part of post-ministerial agenda, said the civil society groups in a letter to all the WTO members.

The civil society groups include trade unions, environmentalists and farmers. This is the largest number of endorsers on a sign-on letter about the WTO in the last decade, according to 'Our World Is Not for Sale' (OWINFS) network, which coordinated the effort.

“Civil society has condemned the unfair negotiations process in the WTO, in which the positions of powerful members are given predominance over the positions and needs of the vast majority of members who are developing countries .... The interests of workers, farmers, and the environment are shunted to the background in favour of corporate profit objectives,” they said in the letter.

### **1 lakh pond programme launched in Anantapur**

The massive programme to dig one lakh farm ponds to deliver the district from drought started off on Thursday, with work simultaneously commencing at 25,000 locations.

Work on the first farm pond was kicked off by District In-charge Minister and Health Minister Kamineni Srinivas in the presence of Ministers Palle Raghunatha Reddy and Paritala Sunitha. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Srinivas said the government was spending Rs. 600 crore on the project to tap rain water. “Currently, only five pumps are operational at the Pattiseema project. Next year, 24 pumps will be used, and water from Srisailam will be made available for Rayalaseema through HNSS. The Chief Minister is keen on making this happen,” he said.

The Minister also appealed to farmers to make use of the mobile soil testing lab vehicle given to the district administration to reduce the use of fertilisers and pesticides.

IT Minister Palle Raghunatha Reddy appreciated District Collector Kona Sasidhar for proposing the idea of digging farm ponds to alleviate problems facing farmers.

“Thanks to programmes like Neeru Chettu, water table in the district has gone up from 20 metres to 12 metres as water was stored in the many ponds, farm ponds, check dams built and modernised at a cost of Rs 400 crore”, said Mr Reddy.

Collector Kona Sasidhar said farm ponds would be filled with water from the HNSS, too, if rain played truant. “We plan to bring 10 lakh acres where groundnut is cultivated under the project named ‘Panta Sanjeevani’ by constructing one farm pond every 200 metres,” he added.

***Govt. spending Rs. 600 on the project, which is aimed at tapping rain water***

### **Venture capital assistance**

*SFAC aid for agribusinesses*

The Small Farmer Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC) is offering venture capital assistance to set up agribusiness projects in agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, medicinal and aromatic plants, minor forest produce, apiculture and fisheries. SFAC managing director Pravesh Sharma said on Thursday that the aim was to facilitate setting up of agribusiness ventures in association with banks. He said it would create potential for diversification of high-value crops, resulting in higher income, both for the supplier and procurer. The consortium conducted camps at Thiruvananthapuram, Ernakulam, Malappuram, Palakkad, Thrissur, Idukki, Alappuzha, Kollam, and Kottayam to create awareness about the venture capital assistance scheme.

– Special Correspondent

### **Badal wants Modi to take up grain stocking at WTO meet**

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Thursday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take up the issue of public stockholding of foodgrains for the nation's food security at the World Trade Organisation's ministerial conference to be held in Nairobi from December 15 to 18.

In a letter, he highlighted Punjab farmers' apprehensions about attempts by the developed nations to close the negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda at the Nairobi meeting.

He said it was agreed at the WTO's 9th ministerial conference in Bali in 2013 that there was a need to update the rules under the agreement on agriculture for public stockholding of food. It was also decided that until a permanent solution to this issue was found, the members refrain from filing complaints against any developing country for stock-holding above the permissible limit.

And it was agreed to "engage constructively" to find a permanent solution by the end of 2015.

## **Trade distortions**

Mr. Badal said that ahead of the Nairobi meeting, there was a debate on whether India's public stockholding could cause distortions in the world markets. "Current food production trends and the projected requirements indicate that India may find the stocks just enough to meet the requirements under the National Food Security Act," he said.

## **Food security**

In terms of public stockholding, rice and wheat procurement had risen over the years to give food security to one of the fastest growing population in the world.

He pointed out that very little of public stocks of rice and wheat had been released for export since 2004 by the Union government, so India should pitch for a permanent solution to the problem as its stake was higher than that of the developed nations.

*Says there is a need to update the rules for public stockholding*

*of foodgrains*

## **Many enrol for Food and Nutrition programme**

As many as 155 out of 325 candidates enrolled by the IGNOU Study Centre at Erode this year are pursuing a six-month certificate programme in Food and Nutrition.

A good number of the candidates among those who have opted for this course are those pursuing B.Ed. They have been pursuing it as an add-on course, P.N. Palanisamy, Assistant Coordinator of the centre said. Faculty from the Food Technology Department in the Kongu Engineering College, where the IGNOU centre functions handle the certificate course.

The next choice is Certificate in Guidance, opted again by school teachers at primary level looking forward to improve their career prospects. There are 72 candidates for this programme. And, the third highest patronage is for B.Com.

The centre offers a total of 26 certificate, degree and post-graduate programmes. A library at the Study Centre caters to the academic requirements of the candidates.

## **Date extended**

A press release issued by the centre said application-cum-prospectus was being issued for Rs. 200.

The last date for applying for the various programmes has been extended to December 31.

Prospectus could be obtained from the centre located on the premises of Kongu Engineering College (Ph. 04294-225252).

## **Surplus shutters opened in Manimuthar dam**

*Water gushes out of all the seven shutters after 23 years*



Flowing to the fields:A view of Manimuthar dam which has water to the brim on Thursday.

Much to the jubilation of farmers here, water started gushing out of the surplus shutters of Manimuthar dam, the largest of the 11 reservoirs in the district, on Wednesday evening as storage level in the dam reached its maximum capacity of 118 feet for the second successive year.

All the 11 dams – Papanasam, Servalar, Manimuthar, Gadana, Ramanadhi, Karuppanadhi, Gundar, Adavinainar, Kodumudiyar, Vadakku Pachaiyar and Nambiyar – are now overflowing Water is being released for pisanam irrigation from all the dams by maintaining a comfortable level conducive to their stability.

The dam, constructed with farmers' contribution of Rs. 1 crore when K. Kamaraj was the Chief Minister, overflowed for the 23rd time on

Wednesday since it was dedicated to the farmers of the then composite Tirunelveli district in 1958. Last time, the dam, having a capacity of 5,511 million cubic feet, overflowed on December 20, 2014.

Storage level in the reservoir was increasing steadily as the inflow shot up during the past few days following heavy downpour in catchment areas. The level, which stood at 94 feet on December 5, rose to 103 feet on December 7 following an inflow of 6,480 cusecs, which sustained for the next 24 hours to take the level to 113 feet.

Though the inflow dwindled to 3,100 cusecs on Wednesday evening, water level crossed 116 feet. A team of Public Works Department engineers camped at Manimuthar dam to monitor the inflow that stood at 3,100 cusecs at 3 p.m. on Wednesday even as the level was at 116.42 feet.

But the influx suddenly increased to over 6,000 cusecs overnight to take the level to 118 feet around 5 a.m. on Thursday to compel the officials to lift all the seven shutters to discharge over 6,000 cusecs.

“After a gap of 23 years, we’ve lifted all the shutters of Manimuthar dam to discharge surplus water,” an official said. The previous occasion was during the 1992 floods.

Whenever surplus water is released through all the shutters, water would be released in both the 40 feet channel, nourishing 2,586 acres of land in nearby hamlets and the 80 feet channel, feeding over 24,500 acres of land in Tirunelveli and Tuticorin districts.

However, water was released only in the 80 feet channel now as several irrigation tanks being fed by it are yet to reach comfortable storage level. All the tanks under the 40 feet channel are brimming with water. Since the influx dwindled, two of the seven shutters were closed around 2 p.m.

Water level in the dams in feet (maximum level in brackets) : Papanasam 141.90 (143), Servalar 147.14 (156), Manimuthar 118 (118), Gadana 83.50 (85), Ramanadhi 82 (84), Karuppanadhi 70.86 (72), Gundar 36.10 (36.10), Vadakku Pachaiyar 50 (50), Nambiyar 22.96 (25), Kodumudiyar 52.50 (57) and Adavinainar 132 (142).

Rainfall in the district (in mm): Servalar dam 23, Papanasam dam 19, Kallidaikurichi and Kannadiyan Channel 7, Gadana dam 5, Cheranmahadevi 4, Ambasamudram 3.60, Kalakkad 3.40, Alangulam



2.40, Ramanadhi dam and Nanguneri 2, Palayamkottai 1.20 and Shencottai 1.

*The dam reached its maximum capacity of 118 feet for the second successive year*

### **Workshop on ‘terrace organic farming’**

A workshop on ‘terrace organic farming’ will be organised at the Minerva Grand Hotel behind Kalaikethan on the MG Road on Sunday. Organic farming expert Rambabu Karri from Visakhapatnam, organic farming practitioners from city Swatantra Lakshmi and KS Rao will speaking on the occasion. The workshop is limited to 50 participants who have to pay a delegate fee of Rs. 100. For details, dial 9676488863.

### **With 0 degree C tag, this A.P. village sizzles**



A tribal woman goes about her work braving the winter chill even before the fog lifted at Lammasingi high on the Eastern Ghats in the Agency areas of Visakhapatnam. — Photo: K.R. Deepak

: A meteorological oddity has placed this tribal village of 500 people in Vizag district on the tourism map of Andhra Pradesh.

Nearly four years ago, on January 15, 2012, due to a local weather condition, the temperature of Lammasingi dropped to zero degree Celsius. Nestled in the Eastern Ghats, the phenomenon caught the

attention of tourism authorities, who announced big plans for Lammasingi, billing it as the ‘Kashmir Valley of Andhra Pradesh.’

The village, 120 km from Vizag, is now a getaway destination for bikers and college students from the port city. The tourist crowd swells to a few hundred during weekends. In December, adventurous youngsters make for Lammasingi, braving the chill and low visibility on the ghat road. There’s little to do here but sit around a bonfire and admire the mist-enveloped trees.

Lammasingi’s Sarpanch K. Raghunath is amused by the curiosity about the new-found reputation of his village. “It occurs in December and takes two days to wane. When the temperature first dropped to zero degree C in 2012, we struggled a lot but later got used to it.”

### **Getting there**

Lammasingi can be reached by car, motorcycle and APSRTC bus. The nearest railhead is the Narsipatnam Road, 30 km away.

Reaching Lammasingi is not difficult but finding a place to stay is. There are no hotels or lodges. Two local people rent out rooms with toilets at Rs. 1,000 a day. But only three rooms are available. There is no way to contact these makeshift inns by phone. There is no organised tourist infrastructure. So tourists stay overnight at Narsipatnam, start early to Lammasingi and return by night.

For a decent meal, one has to go to Lotugedda Junction, about 10 km away.

Retired meteorologist P.V. Rama Rao, a former director of the Indian Meteorology Department, the near zero temperature seen in Lammasingi is on account of the cooling effect of the hills. It was on January 15, 2012, that Lammasingi is said to have recorded zero degree C. That day, the Regional Agricultural Research Station (RARS) at Chintapalle (850 m above mean sea level) recorded 1 degree C. Lammasingi, being 900 m higher, was estimated to have experienced 1-1.5 degree C less, according to RARS associate director of research B. Padmodaya.

The lowest dip in the mercury here occurs in January.

## **Govt. plans big**

With Lammasingi attracting tourists' attention, the State government has drawn up big plans. Some 18.75 acres of land has been identified and handed over to AP Tourism Development Corporation.

“An architect has prepared plans for 25 eco-friendly cottages. The project will have luxury facilities, including a conference hall, a swimming pool, children's play areas, landscaping, etc.,” says APTDC executive director Anand Srinivas. The estimated cost is Rs. 8.75 crore.

*The government should take tribal people on board and preserve the charm of this place. There's no need for big hotels. There should be eco-friendly cottages with kitchens so that tourists can cook their own food.*

*-- Mallibabu, a tourist from Tapeswaram.*



## **Paddy growers get cotton crop loss relief**

Cotton farmers devastated by the whitefly attack on the crop in Punjab's Malwa region got a rude shock when the long awaited compensation was disbursed even to some paddy growers. A string of aberrations pertaining to relief payment have come to the fore, with some farmers getting excess compensation and others not getting any.

The whitefly attack had destroyed nearly two-thirds of the crop in Punjab, mostly in Bathinda region.

Punjab government had released Rs 644 crore for compensation to cotton farmers in August and Bathinda got Rs 220 crore out of this. Nearly, 60% of the amount has been disbursed.

Kulwant Rai of Raikhe village in Bathinda got two cheques of Rs 3,500 and Rs 3,450 as compensation for damage to cotton. This, when he had

sown paddy in his 12 acres. "I returned both cheques to revenue officials," he said.

Bachittar Singh of Lehra Bega village and his three brothers got compensation of Rs 4,400 each for their paddy crop cultivated over 10 acres. But only Bachittar has decided to return the compensation money.

Avtar Singh of Poohla village received Rs 3,700, though he had also sown paddy. When he told the revenue officials that the compensation had been wrongly given to him, he was told to keep the money. This was the result of his land being clubbed with that of his relatives whose cotton produce had got damaged by pest attack.

Punjab PWD minister Janmeja Singh Sekhon, who represents Maur Mandi assembly constituency in Bathinda, said compensation had indeed been disbursed to many farmers who had cultivated paddy.

"I have directed the deputy commissioner to conduct an inquiry and ask the revenue officials to visit the villagers and collect data about this serious anomaly," Sekhon told TOI. Nearly a dozen farmers of Maur Kalan village in Sekhon's constituency have got compensation for damage to cotton despite not sowing the crop.

In some case disproportionate relief amounts have been handed out.

A farmer of Tungwali village got Rs 1.28 lakh for 16 acres at the rate of Rs 8,000 per acre, though he had sown cotton only on eight acres. Another farmer got a compensation of Rs 61,000 for his less than two acres. Yet another farmer got Rs 31,500 for nine kanals (little over an acre) whereas three brothers Jarnail Singh, Karnail Singh and Gurbachan Singh, also from Tungwali, received only Rs 20,000 for their 10 acres.

Poohla resident Gurpreet Singh is yet to get compensation for his for his one and a half acres of cotton crop. "I had to sow wheat by taking loan to

purchase seeds as no compensation was given to me," he said.

Mithu Singh of Giddar village, whose 3-acre cotton crop was destroyed by the pests, is yet to get the relief.

Bathinda DC Basant Garg said, "We have got some complaints of disbursal of cheques to paddy farmers. I have asked the revenue officials to check the anomaly, if any."

### [Change in train timing help farmers earn](#)

Farmers and vegetable growers of Katkumsandi and Kathautia villages of Katkumsandi block in Hazaribag are enjoying benefit of Hazaribag - Koderma train plying between the two districts, as a large number of passengers are visiting Katkumsandi and Kathautia stations to buy cheap and fresh vegetables.

A huge crowd can be seen at Katkumsandi new Market, set up near the two railway stations where customers, even from Koderma and Barhi turn up to buy vegetables. Katkumsandi is known as major vegetable belt of Hazaribag district as the vegetables grown in this region cater the requirement of Hazaribag and surrounding areas.

While the train started in February this year, but train timings changed from October 1 which has become suitable for the people of Koderma and Barhi, who reach Katkumsandi and Kathautia at about 1.30 PM and leave the station at 5 PM, thus having enough time to stop by and shop.

One of the customers, Ashok Kumar said that the fare between Koderma and Barhi to Katkumsandi and Kathautia is only Rs.10 which is very reasonable. He said, "By spending Rs 10 as fare a person save more than Rs. 200."

In Katkumsandi, potato, tomato, cauliflower, cabbage, beans, brinjals and other vegetables are available for less than Rs. 10 per Kg, which is much cheaper than the price in markets of Koderma and Barhi.

Farmers informed that whatever product they bring in the new market is immediately sold. Nirmal Mahato, a farmer said, "Since the change in train timings, we are getting about 500 to 1000 customers per day which have boosted our income. Now we are growing more vegetable to meet the demand."

### How you can grow a pond in a garden pot?



### *How you can grow a pond in a garden pot?*

An indoor water garden can be created using almost any container that will hold water. Growing plants in bottles or jars can be one option. Any type of waterproof bowl will work except those forged of copper, brass or lead. Metals may corrode when reacting to fertiliser and cause plant damage. A pond is not only a welcome addition to the landscape, but can also be an attractive feature indoors. They are also easy to create, maintain and can be customised to fit your requirements. This method for growing plants is not only low-maintenance, but disease resistant too.

## **How to begin**

- After you have picked an appropriate container, fill it with water, gravel, pebbles, sand, marbles, beads or any similar material that sparks your imagination. Add a pinch of powdered or small piece of charcoal to keep the water clear and clean smelling.
- Prepare a concoction of water and fertiliser, using a water soluble fertiliser in the amount of one quarter.
- Growing houseplants in water is also known as hydroponic farming. After having mixed your diluted fertiliser, it is time to choose the right plants.
- Hanging plants or creepers like money plant, taken from cuttings are often the easiest to root in a water, but rooted plants may be used as well.
- Wash the soil completely off the roots of the soon-to-be-indoor water garden plant and cut off any decayed leaves or stems.
- Place the plant in the water-fertiliser solution. You may have to change the solution on occasions. Replace the nutrients solution in every four to six weeks. To reduce algae growth, you can opt for a dark or opaque container. However, should algae become an issue, change the solution more frequently.

## **Miniature Pond**

- The only difference between an indoor pond and an outdoor pond is size, apart from location. Indoor ponds can be as small or as large as space allows. The Indoor ponds or a tub garden can be made from nearly anything like rubber containers, plastic pots, glass aquariums etc. You should avoid using metal or wooden containers. Basins or plastic washtubs make exceptional choices for smaller indoor ponds. It is easy to build and can be a great addition for your balcony or terrace. A small container may be suitable for one plant.
- A container that is only a few inches deep will work for other plants. If you want water lilies in your tub garden, look for a container at least 12 inches deep.
- Piled up stones and plants can be incorporated along the edges of the pond to help conceal the container.

- Prior to building an indoor pond, you'll need to determine its location. Be sure to place the container where you will see it often. Water is heavy and you most likely will not be moving the tub around once the water is added. So, select an area with at least four or five hours of direct sun if you want to grow water lily or other flowering plants. However, some protection from the late afternoon sun is desirable for your container garden. Shallow water plants can be elevated on bricks or other suitable support. Water lilies and other deep-water aquatics should be in a pot on the bottom of the container.
- Stack clean stones along the edges of the pot. The top row of stones should cover the edge of the container. You can also add some artificial plantings along the outer edges of the pond.
- Nearly any plant that enjoys moist indoor environments can be used. Before setting these plants in place, be sure to repot them with clay or sand soil. You can place potted plants in tiers, with some outside the water and others only partially in the water, which can be accomplished by using stones or overturned pots to keep the top of the container above the water.
- Surface plants for water gardens, such as water lilies, must have their roots submerged but the leaves and flowers float above the surface. Don't crowd too many plants into a container. Two to three potted plants and some floaters will make quite an impact.
- Other than replacing water, fertilising and trimming your plants, there is little maintenance involved for pond gardens. When plants begin to grow, add a fertiliser tablet available in the market. If you notice algae, all you need to do is remove the plants, empty container, refill with clean water and replace the plants.

### **Selecting plants**

- While selecting, consider both the ornamental qualities and the practical value of each plant. A good combination will oxygenate the water, compete with algae to keep the water clear, and take up nitrogen to balance the pond's ecosystem.
- Before running out to buy plants for your water garden, make a proper



plan. The plants should not cover more than 2/3rd of the water's surface.

- Floating plants like water hyacinth, water lettuce, parrot's feather grow freely on the water surface and can be placed in all areas of the pond. They grow quickly and require periodic thinning. By shading the water with their leaves, they reduce the amount of light needed for algae to grow.

- Surface plants have their roots in the soil and leaves on long stems that float on the water's surface. By blocking sunlight, they also inhibit the growth of algae. Water lilies are surface plants. Tropical and hardy, they are easily grown and make great plants for the average pond or container garden.

- Always purchase plants from a local nursery. You can then examine the plant to be sure it's healthy. Remove the plant from its pot and look at the root system. Roots should be white and firm, bulbs and tubers should be large and healthy. the right soil

- Clay soil is one of the best options for aquatic plants. It holds nutrients and anchors all plants very well. However, too heavy of a clay concentration in the soil can reduce healthy root growth. If available, this garden soil could be dug up from your yard.

- Sand can anchor shorter plants well, but not tall plants. It will hold some nutrient but not as well as a clay-based garden soil.

- Gravel can work best for filtration purposes. Water runs through gravel faster than soil. That way, any liquid fertiliser released will easily get mixed with the water.

## THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

### **Centre likely to scrap or slash floor price for onion exports**

The minimum export price (MEP) for onions in response to demands by farmer groups for its removal, from States such as Maharashtra and Karnataka, as domestic prices have fallen significantly over the last month.

“The inter-ministerial committee (IMC) on onions is discussing the issue and a suitable measure will be notified very soon,” a government official told *BusinessLine*.



MEP is the minimum price below which exports can't take place. While farmers are demanding that the MEP be scrapped, the Centre is looking at whether it is prudent to remove it at one go, or do it in phases. “The IMC will soon take a call on this,” the official added. The MEP for onions was increased to \$700 per tonne in August from \$425 per tonne, as domestic prices had spiralled due to unseasonal rains, affecting crops in some parts of the country. Following the increase in MEP, exports of onions almost stopped as it became unviable to export the commodity at such high prices.

### **Huge supply**

“Domestic prices of onions are now down for the last few weeks. Since Kharif crop has started coming in, huge arrivals in the local market is depressing prices,” the official said.

Onion prices are ruling as low as ₹11 per kg in the Lasalgaon market as compared to ₹26 per kg in November.

The inter-ministerial group on onions is headed by officials from the Commerce Ministry and includes representatives from the ministries of agriculture and consumer affairs.

### **UPASI urges Govt to limit rubber imports**

The United Planters' Association of South India (UPASI) has called upon the Government to play its role as a regulator and introduce necessary safeguards to limit rubber imports.

UPASI understands the need for imports to bridge the gap between consumption and production, but unbridled imports beyond this gap are clearly causing harm to the domestic growing industry.



Dwindling production would not only affect the income of growers but also lead to higher imports, draining the exchequer of valuable foreign exchange, N. Dharmaraj, President, UPASI said.

Speaking at a stakeholder meeting organised by the Rubber Board to discuss the current crisis in the rubber sector, Dharmaraj said India has shown the maximum negative growth in production of minus 21 per cent among world producers. This was the result of both low prices and high cost of production compared to other producing countries.

In 2014-15, imports were to the tune of 76 per cent of production and 43 per cent of consumption. At the end of October this year, the stock with growers was only 66,000 tonnes, which is an insignificant quantity taking into account that there are 12 lakh growers. The stocks with dealers, processors, and manufacturers was 1,62,000 tonnes.

The projected production for 2015-16 is expected to be below 600,000 tonnes since large areas are being abandoned due to un-remunerative prices, he added.

### **Pot pepper rules steady**

Spot pepper prices remained unchanged on limited activities.

No selling pressure was felt in the market here as primary market dealers and growers were not ready to part with their produce at current rates, market sources told *BusinessLine*.

Meanwhile, they said, dealers in other centres in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh, were not buying from here, citing availability

of allegedly tainted pepper in warehouses in these consuming centres at ₹650 a kg.



On the terminal market here 13 tonnes of pepper – 6 tonnes from high ranges, 2 tonnes from the plains and 5 tonnes of semi processed material – were traded at ₹650, ₹655 and ₹660 a kg, they said.

On the IPSTA December, January and February contracts fell by ₹500 a quintal each to close at ₹69,000, ₹61,500 and ₹55,000 a quintal respectively.

Indian export prices were at \$10,600 a tonne cf for Europe and \$10,850 a tonne cf for USA and remained totally out priced, they said.

### **Soon, a flavoured coconut juice**

After Neera and other value added products, it is now the turn of coconut juice to hit the market as a ready-to-drink beverage.

Developed by CDB Institute of Technology, the flavoured coconut juice will be available in six months. The product has been well received during test marketing, a senior official in the Coconut Development Board has said.

The juice is made out of liquid pulp extracted from the kernel. Fresh green nuts, with 10 months maturity, are suitable for processing. The fresh nut water is mixed with the extracted juice so as to enrich the nutrient contents.

The institute has developed a technology for juice production, with a shelf life of two weeks, and is now in the process of extending the time frame to six months.

After introducing the product in fairs and expos, the board now plans to conduct B2B meets for the promotion of the product as a natural, nutritious and toxin-free health drink.

It will be a healthy dairy substitute and a vegan food product, the official said, adding that the non-dairy milk market is one of the fastest growing consumable products globally with a 15 per cent increase in dairy alternatives.

Besides boosting revenue from coconut palms, such innovative products could ensure farmers a fair, reasonable and steady price for raw nuts, he said.

### **Indian production**

Though India is a global leader in coconut production, it lags behind several other producing countries in production and marketing of coconut juice in various forms.

Given the growth in dairy alternative market, the need of the hour is to encourage Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) and entrepreneurs to make use of the emerging opportunities in the coconut sector. These new products can also be utilised by coconut milk-based delicacies, he added.

## **DECCAN Chronicle**

[Pesticide found in milk decades ago linked to Parkinson's: study](#)



A pesticide used prior to the early 1980s and found in milk at that time may be associated with signs of Parkinson's disease.

**Tokyo:** A pesticide used prior to the early 1980s and found in milk at that time may be associated with signs of Parkinson's disease in the brain, especially for non-smokers, a new US study has found.

"The link between dairy products and Parkinson's disease has been found in other studies," said R D Abbott, from the Shiga University of Medical Science in Japan.

"Our study looked specifically at milk and the signs of Parkinson's in the brain," said Abbott.

For the study, 449 Japanese-American men with an average age of 54 who participated in the Honolulu-Asia Ageing Study were followed for more than 30 years and until death, after which autopsies were performed.

Tests looked at whether participants had lost brain cells in the substantia nigra area of the brain, which occurs in Parkinson's disease and can start decades before any symptoms begin.

Researchers also measured in 116 brains the amount of residue of a pesticide called heptachlor epoxide. The pesticide was found at very high levels in the milk supply in the early 1980s in Hawaii, where it was used in the pineapple industry.

It was used to kill insects and was removed from use in the US around that time. The pesticide may also be found in well water.

The study found that nonsmokers who drank more than two cups of milk per day had 40 per cent fewer brain cells in that area of the brain than people who drank less than two cups of milk per day.

For those who were smokers at any point, there was no association between milk intake and loss of brain cells.

Previous studies have shown that people who smoke have a lower risk of developing Parkinson's disease.

Residues of heptachlor epoxide were found in 90 per cent of people who drank the most milk, compared to 63 per cent of those who did not drink any milk.

Abbott said that the researchers do not have evidence that the milk participants drank contained heptachlor epoxide.

He also stated that the study does not show that the pesticide or milk intake cause Parkinson's disease; it only shows an association.

The study was published in the journal Neurology.