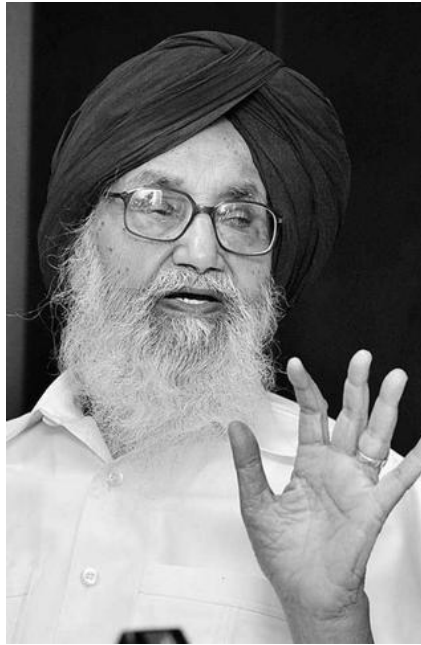


23.12.2015

# THE HINDU

## **18 universities to adopt 150 villages in Punjab**

*Chief Minister Badal launches 'Sampooran Gramin Vikas' programme*



Thrust would be on education, healthcare and vocational training: Badal

Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Tuesday launched 'Sampooran Gramin Vikas' programme under which 18 private and government universities will adopt 150 villages.

A decision in this regard was taken at a high-level meeting of the Chief Minister with the Vice-Chancellors of 18 universities of Punjab, an official spokesperson said.

Likewise, General Manager of NABARD also agreed to adopt five villages, he said.

Experts of the universities would prepare a suitable plan for the development of the adopted villages in accordance with the locals' demands after undertaking socio-economic surveys.

The universities have to submit list of villages adopted by them within a week, he said.

While formulating the plan thrust would be on education, healthcare and vocational training, he said.

The Chief Minister while underscoring the need for a comprehensive survey said it must cover all the aspects related to rural development else this exercise would be "totally futile".

Describing the universities as "lighthouse of expertise and technique", Mr Badal said that they could play a pivotal role in the holistic development of the villages.

This task must be completed with missionary zeal so as to get the desired results, he said, adding, "I will personally monitor the development work in these villages after six months".

The Chief Minister said that there was no dearth of talent in the rural youth but due to lack of proper guidance they lag behind in life.

Citing the example of Meritorious schools opened across the state, Mr Badal said that such efforts were yielding the desired results of empowering the students belonging to weaker sections through tool of knowledge.

He exhorted the Vice-Chancellors of the universities to meet the students of these schools and give proper guidance to them for meeting the future challenges.

During the meeting Punjab Agriculture University and Guru Angad Dev Veterinary University agreed to adopt 51 and six villages respectively.

While Guru Nanak Dev University, Punjabi University, Punjab University, Central University of Punjab, Maharaja Ranjit Singh Technical University, Punjab Technical University, Lovely Professional University, Chandigarh University, Desh Bhagat University, Chitkara University, Ryat Bahra University, Sri Guru Granth Sahib University, Guru Kashi University, Adesh University, GNA University and Sant Baba Bhag Singh University also agreed to adopt five villages each, the Spokesperson said. - PTI

### **Government says it protected India's interests at WTO talks**

*Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman tables statement in Lok Sabha*



India negotiated hard to ensure that the WTO continues to place the interests of developing countries and LDCs at the centre of its agenda, says Nirmala Sitharaman

Commerce Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, rejected charges by the opposition parties that the government was unable to protect India's interests at the recently concluded Nairobi Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

“India negotiated hard to ensure that the WTO continues to place the interests of developing countries and LDCs at the centre of its agenda,” according to a statement tabled by Ms. Sitharaman, who represented India at the Ministerial Conference, the WTO's highest decision making body.

She said the outcomes of the Conference, referred to as the ‘Nairobi Package,’ contains Ministerial Decisions on public stockholding for food security purposes, a Special Safeguard Mechanism (SSM) for developing

countries, a commitment to abolish export subsidies for farm exports particularly from the developed countries. SSM is a tool that will allow developing countries to temporarily hike duties to counter import surges and price falls of farm items.

As the future of the ongoing Doha Round negotiations of the WTO appeared in doubt, India sought and succeeded in obtaining a re-affirmative Ministerial Decision on Public Stockholding for Food Security Purposes honouring both the Bali Ministerial and General Council Decisions, the Minister said. The decision commits members to engage constructively in finding a permanent solution to this issue, she added.

To ensure that the issue of SSM remains on the agenda of future discussion in the WTO, India negotiated a Ministerial Decision, which recognises that developing countries will have the right to have recourse to an SSM as envisaged in the mandate, Ms. Sitharaman said.

Members will continue to negotiate the mechanism in dedicated sessions of the Committee on Agriculture. The WTO General Council has been mandated to regularly review progress of these negotiations.

All countries agreed to the elimination of agricultural export subsidies subject to the preservation of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) for developing countries such as a longer phase-out period for transportation and marketing export subsidies for exporting agricultural products.

Developed countries have committed to removing export subsidies immediately, except for a few agricultural products, and developing countries will do so by 2018, she said. Developing countries, including India, will keep the flexibility to cover marketing and transport subsidies for agriculture exports until the end of 2023, she added.

The Ministerial Decision contains disciplines to ensure that other export policies are not used as a disguised form of subsidies.

These disciplines include terms to limit the benefits of financing support to agriculture exporters, rules on state enterprises engaging in agriculture trade, and disciplines to ensure that food aid does not negatively affect domestic production.

Developing countries, such as India, are given longer time to implement these rules, she said.

On the issue of the future of the 14-year-old Doha Round negotiations, India took the stand that the Development Agenda of the Round (to boost the trade prospects of developing and poor nations) must continue after the Nairobi Conference and no new issues must be introduced into the WTO agenda until the Development Agenda has been completed.

Though India's position had the support of many countries from the developing and the poor world, a few developed countries, including the U.S., opposed the continuation of the Doha Round, Ms. Sitharaman said.

The Nairobi Ministerial Declaration acknowledges that members “have different views” on how to address the future of the Doha Round negotiations but noted the “strong commitment of all Members to advance negotiations on the remaining Doha issues,” she said.

The Ministerial Declaration records that WTO work would maintain development at its centre, she said, adding that it also reaffirms that provisions for S&DT would remain integral.

S&DT, among other things, accords longer time periods for implementing WTO agreements and commitments in addition to provisions safeguarding their trade interests.

## **Cane growers demand CB-CID probe**

*They besiege Chairman of TASCOC at the meeting venue*

Sugarcane growers, who demanded a CBCID probe into the alleged multi-crore scam in Arignar Anna Sugar Mills at Kurungulam in Thanjavur, boycotted the 40th annual general meeting of Tamil Nadu Sugar Corporation (TASCOC) convened here on Tuesday and besieged the officials, including TASCOC Chairman and Managing Director Mahesan Kasirajan.

Soon after the AGM was called to order in the presence of Thanjavur Collector N. Subbaiyan, Pudukkottai Collector S. Ganesh, and Arignar Anna Sugar Mills Chief Executive Officer K. Sivasoundaravalli, acting in their capacity as directors, cane suppliers to the mill raised the banner of revolt.

Cane Growers Association president Peramalakkudi S. Ramanathan and secretary Thozhagiripatti P. Govindaraj, president of Arignar Anna Sugar Mills Cane Suppliers Association president P. Ramasamy, and Cauvery Farmers Protection Sangam district secretary Swamimalai R. Vimalanathan alleged that a huge scam involving crores of rupees and extending to five years had recently been unearthed in the mills.

Preliminary probe had revealed the involvement of mill staff among others and the probe was half-baked. The probe must be entrusted to the CB-CID for the full truth to emerge, they urged.

The erection work related to the power co-generation facility had been dragging on for the past several years, they alleged.

Citing those reasons and demanding the removal of certain officers for alleged malpractice, sections of farmers who were members of the general body boycotted the proceedings.

They came out of the marriage hall where the AGM was held and raised slogans to highlight their demands.

Repeated pleadings of Dr. Subbaiyan to the members to resume the AGM failed to bring them back. He said that a thorough probe was under way into the scam and every one of the accused would be brought to book and the money alleged to have siphoned off would be recovered.

Mr. Ganesh said that the mill had disbursed all payments to cane suppliers without any arrears till the last crushing season.

### **Nabard puts Prakasam credit plan at Rs. 8,638 crore**

Focusing on capital formation in agriculture and allied sectors, the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) has come out with the Potential Linked Credit Plan of Rs. 8,638 crore for 2016-17, 36 per cent higher than the PLP for 2015-16.

Prakasam District Collector Sujatha Sharma unveiled the PLP at the District Consultative Committee meeting here on Tuesday.

The PLP stressed on stepping up term lending in Agriculture and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises sectors to achieve double digit growth. The PLP included new areas such as export credit, renewable energy, credit to medium industries and social infrastructure as per the RBI guidelines.

In addition to focusing on national priorities such as 'Housing for All,' the PLP focused on achieving double digit growth envisaged by the State government by stepping up priority sector lending, NABARD Assistant General Manager Jyothi Srinivas said.

The 2016-17 credit projections included Rs.4,771 crore for crop loans, Rs.1,100 crore for agriculture term lending, Rs.1,175 crore for SHG- bank linkage programme, Rs.712 crore for MSME and Rs. 300 crore for housing. Agriculture Infrastructure (Rs.160 crore), Food Processing (Rs.68 crore), Export Credit (Rs.150 crore), Education (Rs.72 crore), Renewable Energy (Rs.26 crore), Social Infrastructure (Rs.52 crore for educational and healthcare services) and other eligible activities (Rs.52 crore) put together received an allocation of Rs.580 crore, Ms Srinivas added.

## Udumalpet paddy farmers reap profit



Around 35 farmers cultivating paddy over 250 acres in Udumalpet block are showing the way to cut down on expenditure, and increase net income by using technology.

They have come together to hire latest imported gadgets that could transplant paddy seedlings raised in nurseries to nearly 10 acres on the main farm in a single day.

“It is indeed a commendable thing that the farmers did not turn their back to emerging techniques in the mechanisation of farm activities. The earlier models of the machines used for the paddy transplantation in the region have been able to re-plant seedlings only up to three acres on a given day,” said Joint Director of Agriculture A. Mahendran.

Even at the initial stages of transplantation itself, the farmers are able to feel the benefits of using the advanced devices.

“Labour cost has come down significantly when compared to both the manual transplantation and also the re-planting done using earlier models of mechanised transplanters,” said L. Balasubramanian.

Use of these latest machines are helping the farmers reduce the quantity of seeds since peculiar spacing pattern was adopted.



“Only about 15 kg of seeds are needed here for a hectare. Around 50 kg is required if the saplings are planted in a disarranged way when adopting the traditional manual transplanting,” said farmers and agriculture department officials.

Mr. Mahendran said the agriculture department would be giving the farmers an incentive at the rate of Rs. 3,000 a hectare as back-ended subsidy for taking up advanced farming methods.

*Farmers will get a subsidy of Rs. 3,000 a hectare as incentive*

### **Rs.182-crore crop loans disbursed to farmers**

*Cooperation Department has enough urea, DAP, fertilizer*

The Cooperation Department has so far disbursed crop loan to the tune of Rs.182 crore to the farmers in the district.

With three more months left for the current year, the officials have expressed hope that the department would surpass the crop loan target of Rs.222.20 crore, which is Rs.20 crore more than the last year’s achievement.

K.C. Ravichandran, Joint Registrar, Cooperatives, told *The Hindu* that the distribution of crop loan had so far been smooth in the district.

There were no notable issues in Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) in extending crop loans. The proportionate target up to December 15 was Rs.179.9 crore. The PACS had surpassed the target and they had extended Rs.182.20 crore so far. Of them, Rs.60.7 crore had been given to the farmers belonging to Scheduled Caste. The credit required for ‘kuruvai’ and ‘samba’ seasons had been extended. It was stated that sugarcane farmers had been approaching PACS for crop loan. Similarly, a section of farmers, who had planned to raise paddy in January, had sought crop loan. The farmers, who raised crops using the seasonal rainfall, had sought crop loan from their respective PACS. Hence, the annual target would be achieved well before the time.

The credit repayment was satisfactory last year. The PACS had recovered about 85 percent of loan extended to farmers. There was no interest from farmers for crop loan, if they promptly repaid the loan. Many of them had repaid within the stipulated period of eight months.

He said the Department had received 1,000 tonnes of urea. It had also stocks of 1250 tonnes of DAP, 1050 tonnes of complex fertilizer.

### **Thrust to agriculture: farmers get machinery with subsidy**

The Department of Agriculture has distributed farm machinery such as tractors and power tillers to 89 small and marginal farmers with a subsidy of Rs. 84.75 lakh under National Food Security Mission (NFSM) and National Agriculture Development Programme (NADP).

The farmers were distributed the machinery at subsidised rates as they faced hardship in preparing the lands for agricultural operations during peak season because of labour shortage, R. Gurumoorthy, Joint Director of Agriculture said.

To ensure that farmers were not discouraged from taking up cultivation and the net sown area was not affected, they were being offered support with machineries under the guidance of Collector S. Malarvizhi, he said.

They were distributed major farm machinery such as tractors, power tillers and rotavators as per the guidelines issued by the Centre under the Sub Mission on Agricultural Mechanisation (SMAM), he said.

Tractors with more than 20 horse power capacity were distributed to 43 farmers involving a total subsidy of Rs. 53.75 lakh from the National Food Security Mission (Rice), he said.

The department has distributed rotavators to 14 farmers under the pulses mission with a subsidy of Rs.7 lakh and power tillers to 32 farmers under the National Agricultural Development Programme with a subsidy of Rs.24 lakh.

S. Alagappan, Deputy Director of Agriculture, Government of India schemes, said 48 tractor-drawn seed drills would be distributed to farmers to develop plant population in direct-sown paddy areas.

As poor population of plants was seen as a setback in dry and semi-dry paddy fields, the department of agriculture has emphasised that farmers resorted to seed drill sowing method. Small, marginal and SC/ST farmers could avail the seed drills at 35 per cent subsidy rate while others at 25 per cent subsidy, he said. The farmers would also be trained to operate the machinery, he added.

*Farm machinery given 89 small and marginal farmers with a total subsidy of Rs. 84.75 lakh*

### **Focus on poly-culture**

Minister for Agriculture Pocharam Srinivas Reddy said that the Telangana Government was focussed on leveraging technology to improve productivity, especially of fruits and vegetables and it was in this direction that things were moving, with strides being made in promoting poly-culture. Having ushered in poly-culture on an area of 115.66 acres belonging to 71 beneficiaries in Ranga Reddy, Medak, Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal districts in the fiscal 2014-15 at a cost of Rs. 31.28 crore, he said Government had set for itself, a target of covering anywhere between 800 to 1,000 acres in the year 2015-16.

An Addressing an impressive gathering of farmers at a Horticulture Mela he said that considering the unseasonal conditions and the vagaries of nature, adopting new technologies was the need of the hour , he explained.

### **NABARD pegs priority sector lending at Rs.59,831 crore**

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has announced that the priority sector lending for the Telangana State for the year 2016-17 stood at Rs.59,831 crore.

The announcement was made by the NABARD Chief General Manager V.V.V.Satyanarayana during the State Credit Seminar here on Tuesday where the credit plan estimates for the coming year were unveiled. The credit estimates for the state for 2016-17 were 20 per cent higher than the same in the current year, Mr.Satyanarayana noted, and said that accelerating the pace of credit for capital formation in agriculture continues to be the theme of the credit plan for ensuring a sustainable agricultural growth.

### **State to get 165 paddy, millet procurement centres**

*Will avoid distress sale by farmers and help them get minimum support price'*



A foodgrain procurement centre, established by the Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd., was opened at Yeliyuru Kodi in Mandya taluk on Tuesday.

To enable farmers to get remunerative prices for their produce, the Karnataka Food and Civil Supplies Corporation Ltd. (KFCSC) will establish 165 paddy and millets procurement centres this season throughout the State. Nevertheless, the arrival of foodgrains is expected to reduce by at least 50 per cent following scanty rainfall, drought and depleting water level at reservoirs. The procurement centres were opened in Mandya district on Tuesday.

Such centres would avoid distress sale by small and marginal farmers and also help them get the minimum support price, said Rohini Sindhuri, managing director of KFCSC. Paddy would be procured at the rate of Rs.

1,510 a quintal (for common variety), ragi at Rs. 2,100 and jowar at Rs. 2,100 a quintal.

Speaking to *The Hindu* over phone, Ms. Sindhuri said: “The State government issued an order [on December 19] to open centres to purchase paddy, ragi and jowar. The corporation has asked the Deputy Commissioners of all districts to set up the centres.”

The KFCSC is the nodal agency to open the procurement centres. A total of 165 centres were opened during 2014-15. Hence, the corporation has decided to establish 165 centres during the current season. The corporation procured 2.19 lakh metric tonnes of paddy, 1.35 lakh tonnes of ragi and 8,000 metric tonnes of jowar in the last year, Ms. Sindhuri said.

Meanwhile, the Deputy Commissioner inaugurated the procurement centre at Yeliyuru Kodi in the taluk. Such centres will be opened at all taluk centres in the district, said Kumuda Sharath, Deputy Director of Food and Civil Supplies. Appealing to farmers to not to sell their produce through middlemen, she said that farmers should bring Rights, Tenancy and Crops certification of crops and other documents. Farmers can contact the revenue officials, village accountants and agriculture department officer for any clarification or details.

### **Paddy cultivation taken up on 54,000 hectares**

*Area under cultivation expected to cross 90,000 hectares in Tirunelveli district*



Green cover: Agriculture activities are going on in full swing in Tirunelveli district. A farm at Arugankulam near Tirunelveli Junction on Tuesday.—  
Photo: A. SHAIKMOHIDEEN

With all reservoirs and 90 per cent of the irrigation tanks across the district now brimming with water, farming operations in the district have moved to top gear as cultivation of paddy has been completed on 54,285 hectares till Tuesday (December 22).

Since the district has been blessed with abundant rainfall during the northeast monsoon this year, all eleven dams – Papanasam, Servalar, Manimuthar, Gadana, Ramanadhi, Karuppanadhi, Gundar, Adavinainar, Vadakku Pachchaiyar, Kodumudiyar and Nambiyar – have reached their maximum storage level. More importantly, all 921 systemised tanks fed by these reservoirs and more than 90 per cent of the 1,528 rain-fed tanks have reached their full capacity.

Buoyed by this favourable situation, farmers across the district have started farming operations in full swing to complete paddy sapling transplantation on 54,285 hectares till Tuesday.

During this fiscal that commenced on April 1, paddy cultivation has been taken up on 74,965 hectares so far in the district.

Since the farmers are expected to go in for advance kar paddy cultivation in the last week of February or March next as storage level in the dams is comfortable, the area of paddy cultivation during the current fiscal is expected to cross 90,000 hectares.

Meanwhile, Collector M. Karunakaran said there were adequate stocks of chemical fertilizers in all primary agriculture cooperative banks and a credible mechanism for monitoring fertilizer and pesticide price has been put in place. “Since we’ve got adequate fertilizer stocks and the supply is continuing without any problem, there is no need for traders to sell these chemicals at an inflated price. Those who want to make extra money will have to pay a hefty price as the block-level flying squads are conducting

frequent raids in the shops. So this pisanam paddy season is likely to be a highly profitable activity,” said ‘Minnal’ Mohamed Ali, a leading fertilizer stockist from Maanur near here.

Joint Director of Agriculture L. Perumal said all officials attached to his department had been instructed to visit the fields quite frequently so that incidence of pest attack would come to their notice at the right time.

“If our officers happen to notice pest attack, they can prescribe the right solution to the farmers at the right time, which will help avoid resurgence of diseases and ensure better yield. Since all our officials are regularly visiting the farms in every area, we can expect bumper harvest in the district this year,” Mr. Perumal.

*Farmers likely to go for advance kar paddy cultivation in the last week of February or March as storage level in dams is comfortable*

### **Potatoes with the earthy flavour of Mars, grown on terra firma**



The experiment of growing potatoes under the tough Martian conditions is a major step towards saving millions of lives on Earth in view of climate change.— Photo: International Potato Centre

In an attempt to grow potatoes in the most inhospitable environments to save millions of lives on Earth, a team of world-class scientists is set to grow potatoes under the tough Martian conditions.

The experiment, led by the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Peru and NASA, is a major step towards building a controlled dome on Mars capable of farming the invaluable crop.

“I am excited to put potatoes on Mars and even more so that we can use a simulated Martian terrain so close to the area where potatoes originated,” said Julio E Valdivia-Silva, research associate of NASA who is leading the project’s science team.

By using soils almost identical to those found on Mars, sourced from the Pampas de La Joya Desert in Peru, the teams will replicate Martian atmospheric conditions in a laboratory and grow potatoes.

The increased levels of carbon dioxide will benefit the crop, whose yield is two to four times that of a regular grain crop under normal Earth conditions. The Martian atmosphere is near 95 percent carbon dioxide.

“The extraordinary efforts of the team have set the bar for extraterrestrial farming. The idea of growing food for human colonies in space could be a reality very soon,” added Chris McKay, planetary scientist of the NASA Ames research centre.

Beyond the ability to thrive in challenging conditions, potatoes are also highly nutritious.

“How better to learn about climate change than by growing crops on a planet that died two billion years ago?” noted Joel Ranck, CIP head of communications. — IANS



## **Tea prices need to increase: Bhanu**

M. G. V. K. Bhanu, former Tea Board Chairman, said the prices of the commodity should be increased to pay higher wages for workers.

“Unless we get higher prices for the products, it is difficult for tea to survive. Workers will demand more...you have to retain them and keep them happy, if you want quality,” Bhanu said during the annual general meeting of the Indian Tea Association (ITA), the apex association of large tea-growers.

Mr. Bhanu is presently Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Assam. He felt that ITA needs to play a more proactive role in all these matters. Although the meeting was taking place in the backdrop of the deaths of workers in sick and abandoned tea gardens, there was not much mention of this phenomenon during the discussions. These gardens do not belong to ITA members.

ITA Chairman A. K. Bhargava said that further cost pressures on the industry or unsustainable wage increase would threaten the industry’s long-term viability. “Higher cost of production without optimum price-realisation will thwart sustainability,” he said.

Estimating the 2015 crop at about 1,190 million kgs against 1,207 million kgs in 2014, Mr. Bhargava said that a government-backed comprehensive strategy to deal with climate-change is an immediate necessity. On the issue of regulating the use of chemicals in tea-cultivation, he said that the list of chemicals permitted to be used needs to be expanded.

*‘Unless we get higher prices for the products, it is difficult for tea industry to survive’*

## **Farmers stage demonstration**

The Tamila Nadu Vivasyigal Sangam affiliated to the Communist Party of India staged a demonstration opposite the railway junction here on Tuesday urging the Centre to declare Tamil Nadu as a disaster hit state, allot

additional relief funds, sanction Rs. 25,000 an acre for paddy farmers, Rs. 50,000 an acre for sugarcane growers, Rs. 80,000 an acre for banana growers, solatium of Rs. 10 lakh for every deceased, include the tenants in the crop insurance scheme and extend insurance period to January 15, remove encroachments from water bodies, repair and renovate all damaged roads, compensate fishermen who suffered damage and grant of Rs. 20,000 for all huts damaged. Sangam district secretary Balasundaram led the demonstration in which CPI district treasurer N. Balasubramanian, district president of the sangam G. Krishnan, CPI Town secretary S.M. Rajendran, and Sangam Town Organiser Soori Ravichandran participated.

### **Farming activities in full swing in Cumbum Valley**

*Big farmers use transplantation machines to overcome labour shortage*

With commencement of transplantation of paddy seedlings in Cumbum Valley in Theni district, farmers with large land holdings have started adopting farm mechanisation to overcome labour shortage. Heavy storage in Periyar dam and water release helped the farmers prepare their lands and raise nurseries in advance.

With sharp increase in discharge from the dam, water was available in almost all channels. There was no delay in raising nurseries at many places, the farmers said.

Farm activities were in full swing along 15 of the 17 channels.

### **Training on white leg shrimp culture**

A free one-day training programme on ‘pacific white leg shrimp culture’ will be held at the Krishi Vigyan Kendra here on December 29.

A press release from N. Akila, Senior Scientist and Head, said that white leg shrimp, also known as Pacific White Shrimp, is a prawn of eastern Pacific Ocean. Farming is done in ponds in the country.

Small and marginal farmers can venture into shrimp farming and earn good profit besides going for export. Training would be provided on selection of place for rearing, rearing methods, feeds and marketing techniques.

Farmers, members of self-help groups, and youth can participate in the training programme. For registration contact phone: 04286-266345, 266244, and 266650.

### **Training programme**

A one-day training on value-addition and processing of fruits, vegetables and spices was held at ICAR-Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Peruvannamuzhi, on Tuesday. Classes on preparation of jam, pickles, chips, candy and other value-added products from indigenously available fruits like jackfruit, banana, nutmeg, pepper; processing of black pepper; value addition of mushroom was handled by Deepthi, subject specialist of the Kendra. The training was organised as part of 'Entrepreneurship training' to youths, including women, by the Farmers Training Centre, Vengeri. P. Ratha Krishnan, programme coordinator, said the KVK had trained more than 250 beneficiaries on mushroom cultivation and value-addition as off-campus activity in November and December.

### **Minister's pat for organic farming**



*M.K. Muneer said it was important to provide safe food by avoiding harmful methods of production.*

Efforts must be made by all sections of people to promote organic farming to such an extent that vegetables cultivated through this method are exported from Kerala, Minister for Panchayats M.K. Muneer said on Monday.

Harvesting vegetables cultivated at an apartment through organic farming under Kudumbasree's Jaivajyothi project, the Minister said it was important to provide safe food by avoiding harmful methods of production. In this context, the Minister pointed out that safe methods of farming under the Jaivajyothi project held the key to providing vast sections of people vegetables and fruits that were devoid of any harmful pesticides.

In what reminded her of the lead role she played in her comeback film *How Old Are You*, actor Manju Warriar harvested pumpkins and tomatoes produced on the terrace of a 10-storey apartment and said she was glad to be part of the event that marked the success of Kudumbasree's project to provide safe farm produce. This was a mission to create a safe and healthy Kerala, she said.

The terrace of the apartment at Thondayad in the city had tomatoes, pumpkins, lady's finger, brinjal, mint leaves and coriander leaves cultivated through organic farming.

Kudumbasree's District Mission co-ordinator T.V. Muhammed Basheer said in a press release that Jaivajyothi was being implemented with a strong message to create a healthy population by eliminating poisonous or harmful food, referring to pesticide residue that posed very serious health hazards.

Jaivajyothi stressed blending of traditional and safe modern farming practices in order to put the safety of the consumer above everything else. In addition to Kudumbasree's groups on the ground, the mission also aimed at involving self-help groups and residents' associations in promoting the concept of safe farming and safe food, he said. The District Mission was only too keen to guide those willing to take up this safe cultivation method on terraces and other spaces.

## Flood, disease to hit aquaculture sector in 2015-16



*The recent outbreak of EHP fungi and floods will adversely affect shrimp exports.*

The recent floods in the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh and an outbreak of a fungal disease on shrimps may hit revenue of aquaculture companies and exports for the next fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, officials say.

Enterocytozoon Hepatopenaei (EHP), a microsporidia disease in India may have impact on the shrimp production and performance of aquaculture companies including Chennai headquartered Waterbase Ltd. Promoted by the Karam Chand Thapar Group, Waterbase is a leading manufacturer of high quality shrimp feed.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Waterbase CEO Ramakant V. Akula said: “We had a good run for four to five years. But due to the recent outbreak of EHP fungi and floods, Indian shrimp exports will also be adversely impacted. Currently, we are having discussions with international experts and domestic research institutes on how to control EHP fungi in India.”

Till recently, the Indian aquaculture firms were discussing only about Early Mortality Syndrome (EMS) disease. Now, they have turned their focus on tackling EHP. For the last three years, both these diseases have been affecting shrimp production of Thailand, Vietnam, Mexico and China.

Regarding the recent floods, he said that they had to close down shrimp feed mill and processing unit at Nellore.

“Due to incessant rains and flooding in most of parts of Andhra Pradesh, shrimp farming have been adversely impacted. This will have an impact on shrimp feed sales as well,” he said.

Waterbase has drawn up expansion plans that include setting up a hatchery in Nellore next year, widening the dealer network and geographical expansion.

“By 2020, we would to increase our revenue aggressively. Over the next few years, we are planning to set up several hatcheries in shrimp farming areas to support farmers. We already have a feed mill and are also processing shrimps,” he said.

To increase production scale, Waterbase has initiated steps to merge itself with another group firm, Pinnae Feeds Ltd. and the process is expected to be completed soon.



### **Haryana wheat a hit among Punjab farmers**

The shorter crops can withstand changes in temperature and are also resistant to yellow rust disease



With the sowing season for wheat almost coming to an end in Punjab, two varieties of the crop, which were introduced from Haryana, have been popular with farmers, even without subsidy on them.

This season, the variety HD 2967 was brought in for a trial run. But the variety has already covered roughly 75 per cent of the 35 lakh hectares under wheat cultivation. Another variety HD 3086 was also in demand but due to fewer seeds available, hasn't seen the same acreage as the other.

“Every farmer is demanding HD 2967 and HD 3086,” said Dr. Gurdyal Singh, director, state agriculture department. “Maybe next year we could look into increasing the acreage of HD 3086.”

G S Mahal, director (Seeds) at Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), said they supplied over 40,000 quintals of seeds to farmers, seed growers and other state agencies this year. “This includes 13,000 quintal of HD-2967 and 10,000 quintal of HD-3086. Even without subsidy, there is huge demand for HD-3086. We will have to multiply it more in the coming season,” he said. PBW-550 (good for sowing in December) and PBW-621 and WH-1105 varieties too are sown in Punjab on some area.

According to experts the reasons for the farmers taking to the new varieties were probably because the varieties could withstand higher temperatures. The state has been witnessing a steady rise in temperature over the past three to four years. It is also resistant to the yellow rust disease. These varieties also give a yield up to 21.4 quintal per acre against 20 quintal/acre for other varieties.

The crop is also shorter, which will help it withstand strong winds better. “Fluctuations in temperature during the flowering season has become a regular affair now and the HD-2967 variety is suitable in such fluctuations,” said Dr Gurdyal Singh.

### **Textile hub plan gets a boost**

Textile firms promise investment of Rs 3,700 cr that will generate 12,700 jobs.

The state government's ambitious textile sector development project in cotton-growing Vidarbha, Marathwada and North Maharashtra got a boost

with big players pledging Rs 3,700 crore investment to generate jobs for 12,700. Many more projects are in the pipeline.

Sources revealed that in six months, the government is confident of creating jobs for almost a lakh people in Vidarbha and Marathwada. Efforts to provide competitive power tariff is under way. The government has promised adequate land under MIDC to restore confidence of industries willing to make big investments in the cotton belt grappling with farmers' suicide and poor economy.

On Monday, Raymond Industries Ltd signed an investment of Rs 1,500 crore to generate employment up to 7,500.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis told the state Assembly, "The government has offered the letter of intent to Raymond Chairman Gautam Singhania to set up textile project at Nandgaon Peth in Amravati." The project will be developed on 500 acres.

The textile revival is amongst the pet projects of Fadnavis. He stressed a model where cotton-growing fields have to be linked with processing units and readymade garments. It would make the textile sector economically viable and bring higher dividends to farmers. The government has allocated 102 hectares to Messr Shyam Indofab Ltd, MVHM Industries, Suryalaxmi Mills, Siyaram Silk for textile and processing units at Nandgaon.

It will bring in Rs 2,200 crore investment and employment for 5,200. Fadnavis said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's mantra of 'Farm to Fashion' will help in revival of the textile sector. The textile sector is crucial in the socio-economic uplift of cotton-growing farmers in Vidarbha and Marathwada."

Through the textile revival policy, the government identified centres in each region which would be turned into textile parks, with cotton processing and readymade garments.

The new textile hubs sanctioned in MIDC includes Nandgaon (Amravati), Yavatmal, Chikali (Buldhana), Jamner (Jalgaon), Kannad (Aurangabad), Selu (Parbhani), Bhaler (Nandurbar), Malegaon (Nashik), Kunnor (Nanded)



Mazalgaon (Beed), Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation new textile park.

The state government also signed an MoU with BOSCH for skill development of 2,000 youths.

**hindustantimes**

### **Varsities in Punjab to adopt 150 villages to boost development**



#### **Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal**

Chief minister Parkash Singh Badal on Tuesday launched ‘Sampooran Gramin Vikas’ programme under which state universities will adopt 150 villages to boost development.

A decision to this effect was taken at a meeting between the chief minister and vice- chancellors of 19 universities of the state on Tuesday.

It was decided that every university will submit the list of villages adopted by it within a week. Then the experts would conduct a socio-economic survey of these villages to prepare a suitable plan for their development in accordance with demands of people.

While formulating the plan, thrust would be given to education, healthcare and vocational education.

Describing the universities as ‘lighthouse of expertise and technique’, CM Badal said these institutions can play a pivotal role in the holistic development of villages. He said the survey must cover all aspects related to rural development. The CM said he will personally monitor the development work in these villages after six months.

Citing the example of meritorious schools that have come up across the state, Badal the initiative has resulted in the empowerment of students of weaker sections. He told V-Cs to meet students of meritorious schools and give them more guidance on career opportunities.

During the meeting, Ludhiana-based Punjab Agricultural University and Guru Angad Dev Veterinary University agreed to adopt 51 and six villages, respectively. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Punjabi University Patiala,

Punjab University, Chandigarh, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Maharaja Ranjit Singh Technical University, Bathinda, Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar, Lovely Professional University, Phagwara, Chandigarh University, Gharuan, Desh Bhagat University, Chitkara University, Ryat Bahra University, Sri Guru Granth Sahib University, Guru Kashi University, Adesh University, GNA University and Sant Baba Bhag Singh University also agreed to adopt five villages each.

The general manager of national bank for agriculture and rural development (NABARD) also agreed to adopt five villages.

### **Jaipur Literature Fest 2016 to focus on culture and heritage**

The rich culture and heritage of Rajasthan will come alive at the Jaipur Literature Festival, beginning January 21.

The literary event will have a number of sessions on the tradition, culture and writers of Rajasthan. For instance, the session ‘Meera Bai: Jeevan Ki Kavita’ will explore the life of the celebrated 16th century poet and devotee of Krishna.

Madhav Hada, author of a widely acclaimed book on the life, time and social environs of the Bhakti poetess; Alpana Mishra, a young Hindi novelist and associate professor; and singer Suman Yadav will give audiences a glimpse of the beautiful musical settings of Meera Bai’s work in this session.

Organisers of the festival informed that another session – Rajasthali: Katha aur Kathakaar – will explore the unique cultural and linguistic heritage of the state, with its rich diversity of ballads, epics and oral traditions finding echoes in readings by well-known writers and poets from the state. Dr Satya Narayan Soni, writer of Ghamsan and Dhan-kathava, well-known and award winning short story writer Reena Menaria and Manohar Singh Rathore, a Rajasthani and Hindi writer, will speak in the session, moderated by Nand Bhardwaj.

The rich, oral Kaavad tradition will be celebrated and explored in ‘Kaavad: The Itinerant Storytellers of Rajasthan’.

The Kaavadiya Bhats of Mewar and Marwar use a portable shrine of multiple unfolding panels to bring to life, myths, histories and lineages. Rituals, symbolism and narratives converge in a unique space in a virtual pilgrimage, leading from the external to the innermost shrine.

Nina Sabnani will discuss the dynamics between words and images that are the essence of the Kaavad repertoire, while Kojaramji and his accompanist will demonstrate through a compelling performance.

Former Udaipur royal Arvind Singh Mewar will launch ‘Rajasthan on a Platter/ Rajasthan Ka Khana Peena’, an informative cook book on the wide and delicious variety of traditional culinary items.

Dr Suman Bhatnagar and Dr Pushpa Gupta, both professors at Maharana Pratap University of Agriculture and Technology in Udaipur, have written the book.

Other authors from Rajasthan who will appear at the Jaipur Literature Festival include Prem Chand Gandhi, poet, playwright, translator and columnist; Harish Karamchandani, recipient of the Rajasthan Sahitya Akademi Award for his poetry collection Samay Kaisa Bhi Ho.

Others include poet Ravindra Prabhat whose work often touches on human suffering and social issues; Om Purohit Kagad, well-known author and poet in both Hindi and Rajasthani; and Mithesh Nirmohi.

### **Five tips for a healthy festive meal**



Christmas and New Year’s celebrations together make for a heavy meals - an overdose of fatty food and alcohol. But do not let that stop you from celebrations. It is totally possible to prepare for these occasions by taking a few simple steps.

How to have fun without depriving yourself while remaining on form and full of energy? It's not always easy to find the right balance when faced with the celebratory meals at this time of year. Prevention is better than cure. Here are five tips to stop you from falling into the trap of excess.

### **1. Do some sport in the morning**



As you'll be having a copious meal in the evening, you need to think about preparing early on in the day by doing some sport which will increase your energy expenditure for the day. The nutrients will be used for your body's recovery rather than being stored as fat.

### **2. Eat lots of vegetables at lunch**



The day of the celebratory meal, eat plenty of vegetables at midday to prevent the acidity that could result from the high-protein meal later on. It will also balance your needs for the day if you can't eat any in the evening.

### **3. Don't come to dinner starving**



It's important not to arrive at the table with an empty stomach. Before leaving, you can eat a piece of fruit accompanied by a cup of green tea. This will fill up your stomach and prevent hunger pangs. As a result, you'll avoid falling into the trap of taking an aperitif with high-fat salty crackers.

### **4. Before and during the meal**



Before you sit down at the table, drink 2 or 3 tablespoons of olive oil to prevent fermentation in the digestive tract. Drink water to avoid the dehydration caused by alcohol, and breathe. We often start to eat quickly in a purely emotional way. A few deep breaths will alleviate stress and make it easier to eat slowly.

During the meal, take the same wine all the way through to avoid the damage caused by mixing, and don't keep topping up your glass.

## 5. Create a festive, but light meal



If you're doing the inviting, take the opportunity to replace fatty poultry with fish; cream and butter with herbs and spices; cake with a light fruit-based dessert; and chocolates with dried fruit, which are rich but contain fewer calories. As the meal is already heavy, opt for tea rather than mulled wine.

If you're invited to a festive meal, taste everything but don't have second helpings.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

**Russia ready to buy cheese, review riders, but India unsure**



Centre weighing option of convincing Moscow to do away with captive cattle condition up-front

**NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 22:**

India can start exporting hard cheese to Russia if it wishes, as Moscow has agreed to its initial demand that the condition that only those dairies would be allowed to export that have captive cattle ranches be reviewed six months after export to the country begins.

New Delhi, however, is now weighing the option of negotiating harder to get a waiver on the condition before exports start, as only two Indian companies will qualify for exports under the given stipulation, a government official told *BusinessLine*.

“We are apprehensive that if we sign the export protocol without resolving the issue of the mandatory requirement of dairies owing cattle, we may not be able to sort it ever,” the official said.

Earlier this year Russia had agreed to start importing dairy items, specifically hard cheese, from India, but it lay down the condition that only dairy plants with over 1,000 cattle could export.

Only two Indian producers of hard cheese – Parag Milk Foods and Shreiber Dynamix Diaries – qualify for exports under this condition while all others, including cooperatives like Amul, do not, as Indian dairies mostly do not own their own farms.

Russia insists that dairy exporters should have a captive cattle farm as it could then get a certificate from an authorised veterinarian servicing the dairy specifying that the cattle had been properly vaccinated and was free of foot-and-mouth disease, tuberculosis, brucellosis and leukemia.

“Our embassy in Moscow and the Export Inspection Council of India are in talks with the Russian quality control agency trying to persuade them that the milk sourcing model that will be followed by the exporting firms would ensure that there are no contaminants or disease causing germs in the sourced milk,” the official said.



India suggested that clusters of villages from where dairy plants source their milk could be identified and veterinarians assigned to each cluster who could give a certification related to all required vaccinations and FMD outbreak.

“Over the last few months of discussions with the Russian officials on the issue, we have realised that it could take a lot of time to resolve such matters. If we agree to an export protocol with just a provision of review, the pressure on the Russians to give us a permanent solution would lessen,” the official said.

But also at stake is the future of the companies that qualify to export under the existing rules as they stare at an uncertain future. “It is a call we will have to take,” the official added.

(This article was published on December 22, 2015)

### **Castor prices seen bearish on glut-like situation; farmers seek support price on lines of cotton**



Farmers in Gujarat seek MSP for the oilseed

#### **AHMEDABAD, DECEMBER 22:**

In a glut-like situation, castor farmers may face an year of excess supply that will keep prices of the oilseed under a check. While the overall demand has

remained subdued and huge carryover stocks likely to add to supplies, analysts expect a downside trend for the oilseed.

### **Acreage up**

Castor sowing for the year kharif season 2015-16 is estimated to be a tad higher by about one per cent to 11.01 lakh hectares (lh) compared to 10.19 lh in the corresponding period last year.

Last year with about 10.19 lh of area, castor production was estimated at around 1.3 million tonnes.

“About 40 per cent is the last year’s unsold crop available in the market. More so, this year’s production will add to that. Weak exports continue to remain a concern. The prices have been stable but we suspect a downside trend going forward,” said Biren Vakil, a commodity analyst based in Ahmedabad.

“Going forward, supply is going to increase faster than the demand, hence we suspect a glut. Till now Indian market has not reflected the global castor price trend but we see a downside in the range of 15-20 per cent in next couple of quarters,” said Vakil.

### **Demand for MSP**

Castor prices hovered in the range of ₹ 750-780 per 20 kg at the spot market.

However, on the lines of cotton, castor farmers too have raised their demand for fixing a minimum support price (MSP) for castor.

“North Gujarat has high cultivation of cotton and castor. Recently, the State government had announced a bonus for cotton, but it was not much appreciated by the farmers. Mainly because the announcement came after they sold the crop. Castor is a crop, which will soon be ready for harvest and sale. The (castor) farmers have represented seeking to fix an MSP of ₹ 1,000 per 20 kg,” Ranchhodbhai Desai, MLA from Patan wrote in his letter to the Chief Minister Anandiben Patel.

### **Price outlook**

“Currently, castor prices are in the range of ₹ 3,750-3,900 a quintal. In the short-term, prices may briefly touch ₹ 4,200. But the overall trend appears

to be downward with a possibility of about 10-15 per cent decline,” said Jagdeep Garewal, analyst at Kunverji Commodities in Ahmedabad.

### **Weak exports**

Overall exports has remained slower since 2013 when India exported about 4,80,000 tonnes, which fell to about 4,10,000 tonnes in 2014.

(This article was published on December 22, 2015)

## **Maharashtra to spend ₹ 50 cr for reviving govt-run dairies**

### **MUMBAI, DECEMBER 21:**

The Maharashtra government is planning to revive its dairies and has earmarked ₹ 50 crore for their revival. It is also working to create a pan-Maharashtra brand in the State.

A senior State government official said that a detailed study would be undertaken as how the government dairies could be turned around based on existing land and other infrastructure. A lot of attention would be given for creating its own brand and niche products in the market. Dairying could become a big money spinner for the State government, the official said.

Currently, the State government dairies are only processing less than 1.20 lakh litres of milk per day out of the 125 lakh litres processed in the State. Private dairies process about 72 lakh litres and the rest is taken care by the co-operative dairies.

The State’s government premier dairy Aarey was established in 1949 at Aarey colony, Goregaon and was inaugurated by first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Located in the western suburbs of Mumbai, the central dairy and surrounding colony is spread over 3,166 acres of prime land.

The official pointed detail studies would be undertaken as to leverage the locational advantage of Aarey as well as other dairies in the State. Funding options for reviving the business would be considered in great detail.

Since 1980s the State government-controlled dairies have been on the decline. As a number of co-operatives and private dairies entered in the same market and took away that business from the government-run dairies.

The official said that State government assumed that co-operatives dairies would be more efficient therefore state dairies took a back seat. But due to corruption and inefficiencies that process never took critical mass. In the process, the farmers suffered a lot of hardships. Therefore, the new government wants to revive its dairies using the existing land and infrastructure.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis in a recent interview with *BusinessLine* had said that government dairies would revive and a brand similar to Amul having a national reach would be created.  
(This article was published on December 22, 2015)

### **Volume dips at Coonoor tea sale**

#### **COONOOR, DECEMBER 22:**

The final auction of Coonoor Tea Trade Association for 2015 (Sale No: 52) will take place on Wednesday for which a volume of 10.49 lakh kg has been catalogued. This is as much as 1.89 lakh kg less than last week's offer. Of this, 6.90 lakh kg belongs to leaf grades and 3.59 lakh kg, dust grade. As much as 9.49 lakh kg belongs to CTC variety and only one lakh kg, orthodox variety. Homedale Estate's Broken Pekoe, auctioned by Global Tea Brokers, topped the Leaf auction and the entire CTC market last week when Vora Sons bought it for ₹ 218/kg. Darmona Estate's Broken Orange Pekoe Small fetched ₹ 202. In the Dust tea auction, Darmona Estate's Super Fine Dust grade, auctioned by Paramount Tea Marketing, topped when Belmont Tea and Produce Co bought it for ₹ 203. The market will remain closed for Christmas and New Year holidays and the first auction for 2016 will take place on January 7.

(This article was published on December 22, 2015)

### **Cardamom prices fall on mismatch in supply-demand**

#### **KOCHI, DECEMBER 21:**

Sharp rise in cardamom production in the country in recent years without a corresponding growth in export and domestic demand is pulling its prices to below remunerative levels.

Growers in Kerala's Idukki district told *BusinessLine* that anything below ₹ 700/kg was not remunerative.

The average price at the 12 auctions held every week in Kerala and Tamil Nadu hovers around ₹ 600 following huge arrivals. The total output for the current season, given the upsurge trend so far, is estimated at over 30,000 tonnes, according to trade sources in Kerala's Idukki district and the country's main trading hub Bodinayakannur in Tamil Nadu.

India was the only supplier of cardamom to the world market until the entry of the lone competitor, Guatemala in late 1980s. In fact, Indian small cardamom was enjoying a monopoly in the world cardamom market until 1983. But, towards the end of 1980s India lost this monopoly to the Latin American country.

If the country exported 53 per cent of its total cardamom production in the 1980s, it fell sharply to 8 per cent during 1990's, and to 5 per cent during 2002-03. It was reduced further to 3 per cent in 2006-07. Thus, 97 per cent of the global market of cardamom was retained by Guatemala.

According to the Spices Board, Indian cardamom output has been rising steadily from 10,380 tonnes in 2010-11 to 15,000 the next fiscal and to 16,000 tonnes in 2013-14. In 2014-15, it is estimated at 18,000 tonnes. The trade estimates put the production in 2015-16 at around 30,000 tonnes.

Now there is a total extent of 39,730 hectares of cardamom plantations in Kerala. Karnataka has 25,050 hectares while Tamil Nadu has 5,160 ha under the crop in 2014-15, according to the Spices Board.

Exports have been vacillating between 2,000 tonnes and 4,000 tonnes in recent years. Availability of cardamom at competitive rates from Guatemala in the world market is pointed out as the reason that is negatively affecting the exports, export sources in Bodi said.

(This article was published on December 22, 2015)