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# THE HINDU

## **N.G. Ranga Award for progressive farmer**

A progressive farmer, P. Sambasiva Rao, who showed the way to fellow farmers in sustainable farming, has been selected for the Best Farmer Award instituted by the N.G. Ranga Kisan Samstha.

The award will be presented to Mr. Rao, who have grown organic paddy through direct sowing using drip irrigation in Drondula, near Martur in Prakasam district, during the 115th birth anniversary celebrations of the veteran parliamentarian here on Saturday.

The farmer has also taken up organic cultivation of as many as eight crops simultaneously to cut down costs on the one hand and maximise productivity on the other.

The Veligandla Primary Agriculture Cooperative Society, Tangutur Milk Producers' Union and Jagarlamudi Lift Irrigation scheme were also selected for the award in the respective categories, said Samstha president Alla Venkateswara Rao.

Agriculture science student K. Rishita and agriculture engineering student G. Krishna Reddy, both from Bapatla, will be given a cash prize of Rs. 10,000 each, said Samstha secretary Ch. Seshaiiah.

## **Karikalan appointed Director of Agriculture**

T. Karikalan has been appointed as the Director of Agriculture in a reshuffle of 14 government officials in the territorial administration on Thursday.

Mr. Karikalan will in addition to charges (Managing Director, PIPDIC/Special Secretary, Fisheries and Revenue) already held by him will also function as the Director of Agriculture.

S. Ganessin, Managing Director, PAPSCO, has been posted as the Member Secretary, Bharathiar Palkalaikoodam on deputation in the reassigning of departments among Puducherry Civil Service (PCS) officers.

According to a notification from Lieutenant Governor A.K. Singh, L. Mohamed Mansoor is appointed as Director of Higher and Technical Education while M. Panchatcharam has been posted as Deputy Secretary (AR Wing).

S. Nagarajan, Deputy Director (Civil Supplies) will hold additional charge of Managing Director of Jayaprakash Cooperative Spinning Mills, Karaikal. B. Prabakaran is the Chief Superintendent of Jails. B. Zareena Begam has been appointed as the Officer on Special Duty, Directorate of Health and Family Welfare Services. M. Gunasekaran will hold additional charge of Managing Director of PAPSCO in addition to charges already held by him.

P. Sundararajan has been posted as Deputy Director of Local Administration Department and D. Rangunathan as Director of Adi-draavidar Welfare Department.

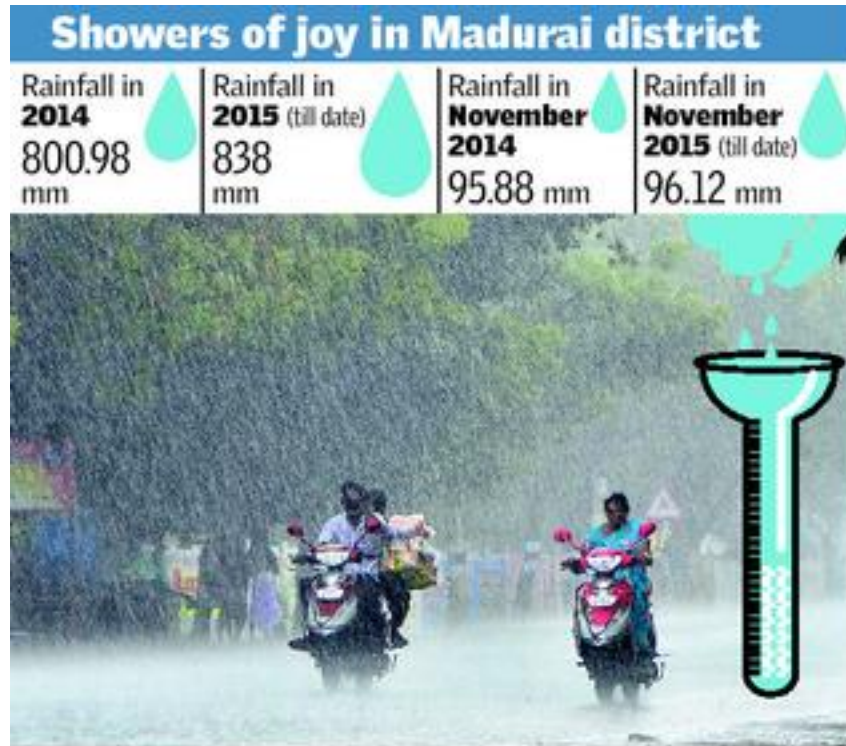
G. Johnson has been posted as Managing Director of PASIC on deputation. S. Mahalingam has been transferred and posted as Deputy Director of Local Administration Department in Karaikal.

P. Segar will hold additional charge of Deputy Director (Administration), Agriculture department in addition to charges already held by him. The Lieutenant Governor has also ordered the promotion of 10 officers holding Schedule II posts of Pondicherry Civil Service (PCS) to the Entry Grade purely on ad-hoc basis for a period of one year.

***Officials of territorial administration reshuffled***

## Five-day November bounty cheers farmers in Madurai

*Storage level comfortable in dams; 50,100 ha ready for samba cultivation*



While rainfall recorded in the district in the whole of November last year was 95.8 mm, the first five days of this month alone recorded 96.12 mm.

Agriculture Department officials said that rainfall recorded in October was much lesser than what was projected and hoped that the November rains would offset the shortfall. “The recent downpour has greatly benefitted rain-fed crops such as pulses, millets and cotton raised in Tirumangalam, Kallikudi, T. Kallupatti and Sedapatti areas. While the target for cotton had been fixed at 5,200 hectares, it had exceeded 6,000 hectares,” said Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge) Sarnath Babu.

The last week spell has also improved storage in dams. It would benefit single crop farmers in Melur. “Nearly 50,100 hectares are readying for samba cultivation and the comfortable storage in dams would enable timely release of water for irrigation,” a Public Works Department official said. In a

few areas, water from Sathayar dam, which was released after the rains and subsequent increase in water level, has brought cheer to the farmers.

In Madurai alone, 53 mm of rainfall was recorded on Wednesday and areas such as Sathayar, Melur and Shanmuganadhi received over 20 mm of rainfall.

### **Ready for harvest**

An Agriculture Officer from Vadipatti said that paddy crops in the area were ready for harvest. “The farmers have asked us to open Direct Procurement Centres soon as harvest will begin after Deepavali. The farmers hope that there will not be more rains in the coming days as it would affect standing crops,” he said.

In the district, 14,800 hectares of paddy would be harvested during the kuruvai season.

### **Rain now may affect paddy harvesting**

*Growers worried as standing crop is in danger of getting destroyed*



Normal to heavy rain, though intermittent, as part of the south-east monsoon across Dakshina Kannada since over a week has kept paddy farmers a worried lot as it is likely to destroy the standing crops as well as affect the harvesting process.

Paddy growers in the district harvest the crop in October and November. This time, sowing and harvesting were delayed due to a delayed monsoon. Rajesh Shetty, a paddy grower on the periphery of Mangaluru said, he would wait for a couple of days before proceeding with harvesting the standing crop.

If it pours continuously, there is danger of the grown-up paddy getting destroyed, he said.

Mr. Shetty said that some of the growers, who had harvested the crop and left it in the field for drying, have been affected by the rain.

Since it rains during the evenings, farmers are forced to wind up harvesting by afternoon and shift the hay immediately to their courtyards, Mr. Shetty said.

Joint Director of Agriculture H. Kempe Gowda told *The Hindu* that there is no imminent threat to standing paddy crops as of now.

“Only if it rains continuously for days together, there will be a problem for farmers,” he said.

As farmers in the district undertake staggered sowing, starting from June and lasting till August, the entire area under paddy would not come for harvesting at one time. While paddy grown on about 2,000 hectares had already been harvested, another about 2,000 hectares is now ready for harvesting, he said.

As of now, the rains would not impact the paddy output in the district, Mr. Gowda added.



*Area under paddy cultivation: 32,000 hectares*

*Actual area paddy sown: 28,000 ha*

*Ready for harvest at present: 2,000 ha*

### **Maize farmers reap benefits of decreased output**



Maize fetches more than the minimum support price in Karimnagar marketyard.- Photo: By arrangement

Even as the cotton farmers were a worried lot over non-availability of minimum support price (MSP) to their hard-earned produce, the farmers who had cultivated maize were reaping riches with good market price due to huge demand for the product.

The maize farmers were getting a whopping Rs. 1,520 per quintal against the MSP of Rs. 1,325 per quintal. Maize is sold at not less than Rs. 1,450 per quintal in any market yard in Karimnagar district.

As soon as the maize crop arrives in the market, the traders purchase the crop like hot cakes by paying more than the MSP. Though the crop has just started arriving into the market, the sales are very good compared to last year.

Due to the huge demand, the Markfed has also not entered into the market to produce maize. The traders have procured more than 7,207 quintals of maize in the Karimnagar agricultural market committee till date during this season by paying more than the MSP. Due to prevailing drought conditions, the maize was cultivated in only 49,524 hectares against the normal area of cultivation of 56,090 hectares. But, the farmers reaped riches following the dismal production.

Agricultural department sources said that there was huge demand for the crop in poultry and other sectors due to less produce. They hoped that the prices would further increase in the coming season due to the shortage.

***To date, traders have procured more than 7,207 quintals of maize in the Karimnagar agricultural market committee***

### **KCT to launch commercial operations on Nov. 15**

*Orient Express Lines to connect transshipment hubs of Colombo and Singapore*

The Kakinada Container Terminal (KCT) on Thursday announced the launching of commercial operations and introduction a feeder service connecting the transshipment hubs of Colombo and Singapore from November 15.

KCT, a joint venture set up by PSA Chennai Investments Pvt Ltd, Bothra Shipping Services Pvt. Ltd, and Kakinada Infrastructure Holdings Pvt. Ltd with equal shareholding for developing and operating handling facilities in two existing berths, held a traders' meet here to make the announcement.

Orient Express Lines (OEL) will launch feeder service with a capacity of 1,100 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) on Chittagong-Kakinada-Colombo and Haldia-Kakinada-Singapore routes.

KCT will have an initial annual handling capacity of 200,000 TEU. The terminal has a quay length of 300 metres and equipped with mobile harbour cranes and reach stackers.

“KCT will serve the agricultural, seafood and commodity trade, and cater to the growing demand for containerisation of such produce in the Kakinada region. We are honoured to be able to participate in this project,” PSA India Managing Director Mike Formoso said.

PSA India is the Indian arm of Singapore’s PSA International, one of the leading container terminal operators.

Mr. Formoso said container operations at Kakinada would offer freight advantage for rice, seafood, ceramics, paper, and agro product traders of Samalkot, Rajahmundry, Bhimavaram, Eluru, and Vijayawada.

### **Spice trading centre to be opened**

Kadamba Spice Trading Centre will be launched at Market Yard Sirsi on November 18, according to a release by Kadamba Marketing Trust on Thursday.

Pepper, cardamom, clove, nutmeg, ginger and turmeric are grown in Uttara Kannada district as subsidiary crops but the growers are not getting suitable rates. The centre would arrange sale of spices through tenders, said trust president Shambulinga Hegde.



## **‘Ensure release of water from Tungabhadra dam’**

*KRRS concerned over drawing of water by industries*

Darur Purushotamgouda, president of the district unit of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene, has urged the Irrigation Department to ensure release of water into the right bank high-level and the right bank low-level canal of Tungabhadra reservoir till December- end and till January 15, respectively.

Speaking to presspersons here on Thursday, he said that around 56 tmcft of water was stored in the reservoir of which 22 tmcft would get exhausted by releasing water to the command areas. The remaining water, after earmarking for the perennial canals – Raya and Basava – and also for Ballari city’s drinking water needs, could be used to protect not only the standing crops but also help farmers increase their yield.

Mr. Gouda, while expressing concern over the illegal drawing of water by industries, which would hit farming in the command area, urged the officials to prevent it immediately and protect the interest of farmers.

“This is for the second time in the past 15 years that the reservoir at Hosapete had not got filled due to deficient rainfall. Farmers of the command area should get their due and it is the duty of the elected representatives and officials to protect the interest of farmers. They should also prevent suicides by farmers, who have invested on the land,” he said.

Gangavati Veeresh, K. Shivayya, D. Nagendrappa, Karur Thimmareddy were present among others.

***‘Farmers of the command area should get their due’***

## **Chikka Kere tank bund breaches owing to heavy rain**

*Around 100 acres of agricultural land inundated*



Standing paddy crops in about 40 acres of land were washed away following the breach of Chikka Kere tank bund at Keregodu in Mandya taluk on Thursday.

Standing paddy crops cultivated in about 40 acres of land was washed away in floods at Keregodu, a village in Mandya taluk, in the early hours of Thursday, following breach of Chikka Kere tank.

About 100 acres of agricultural fields were inundated following the breach.

### **Officials visit**

On being informed of the breach, officials from the departments of revenue, agriculture and police visited the spot. According to them, the tank bund was very weak and it breached due to heavy rain on Thursday morning. Officials said that they would initiate measures to strengthen the tank bund.

“We will take up a study to ascertain losses,” a senior revenue official told *The Hindu*.

Meanwhile, farmers raised slogans against the officials and demanded that compensation be paid for damaged crops.

They said that they lost their standing crops worth Rs. 16 lakh due to floods.

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- *Officials of the departments of Revenue, Agriculture and Police visit the spot*
  - *The bridge has been in a dilapidated condition for many years, say officials*
  - *A study to be taken up to assess the total loss*
  - *Affected farmers seek adequate compensation*

### **Water level at Mettur**

The water level at the Mettur Dam stood at 68.15 feet on Thursday against its full reservoir level of 120 feet. The inflow was 31,862 cusecs and the discharge 1,000 cusecs.

### **Diabetes awareness programme on Nov. 7**

The Departments of Medicine and Pediatrics, Kasturba Hospital, will organize an educational interactive programme for young patients with diabetes at Medicine 'B' OPD at the hospital here from 2.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. on November 7.

The aim of the programme is to educate patients regarding life style modifications, diet, exercise, yoga and proper administration of insulin and medication and controlling sugar. All young diabetics, under 25 years, can avail of this opportunity to get free blood sugar checkup and consultation.

Youth and children also are victims of a variety of the disease known as Type I diabetes. Several young adults may also develop diabetes. These patients need to strictly control the disease to avoid complications. The programme will focus on such patients. For details, call: 8971738366.

*All diabetics, under 25 years, can get free blood sugar checkup and consultation*

## Exhibition of bird photos



The Iruvanjhippuzha Protection Committee is organising an exhibition of bird photographs by photo journalist and environment activist P.T. Muhammed in connection with National Bird Watching Day (November 12) at the Lalithakala Akademi Art Gallery in the city from November 10 to 15.

Mr. Muhammed, who has been a photo journalist in different Malayalam dailies with a number of attention-grabbing pictures to his credit, has also been involved in environment protection campaigns in different parts of the State. Winner of several awards including the best photography award by the Photography Society of Kerala in 2002, Mr. Muhammed has conservation, human rights and wildlife as some of his favourite subjects.

The exhibition titled *Tooval Yatra* (A feather trip) will showcase a number of photographs taken by the lens man from different parts of the State during his 25-year-old career, said the organisers. It will also include snaps of some of the rare migratory birds from different parts of the district including the Mavoor wetlands.

District collector N. Prasanth will open the show at 4 p.m. on Tuesday. Environmentalist T. Sobeendran, Zoological Survey of India Kozhikode Regional Centre scientist Jafer Palot and Press Club president Kamal Varadoor will be present on the occasion.

## Don't pollute our Diwali



Students of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malleswaram appeal for clean celebrations

*Around 100 students from classes six to 10 from Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malleswaram, went to several houses with this appeal.*

“Aunty, please don't burst crackers during Diwali. It causes air and noise pollution... let us celebrate a cracker-free festival.” This was the appeal of a group of ‘Green Ambassadors’, who went around Malleswaram presenting saplings and hand-made greeting cards.

Around 100 students from classes six to 10 from Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malleswaram, went to several houses in the neighbourhood with this appeal. Some residents gave in writing that they will not burst crackers. The students received a lot of appreciation and encouragement from the residents for their civic sense.

T. Prabhudas, principal of Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malleswaram, told *The Hindu* that the idea came from members of the Green Ambassadors club. The teachers helped them work out the modalities, while one of the parents –



a senior official with the Horticulture Department – donated saplings that were presented to residents.

Vice-principal Rubina M.R. and other teachers from the school accompanied the students, who were divided into groups of 10, on their tour in the locality.

Ms. Rubina said that the students started with a presentation in the school assembly in the morning. “The response from residents was overwhelming. It has motivated the children to take up similar campaigns in future, which will go a long way in protecting our environment,” she said.

### **Special toor dal counters will be closed, says Sunitha**



Civil Supplies Minister Paritala Sunitha inspecting the stock at the Super Bazaar in Visakhapatnam on Wednesday. —PHOTO: BY ARRANGEMENT

*Sequel to availability of the commodity at Rs.143 per kg in the open market*

Special counters to sell toor dal at Rs. 143 a kilo would be closed since many were saying that the commodity was available for the same price every where, Minister for Civil Supplies Paritala Sunitha said here on Wednesday after making surprise checks.



The Minister inspected a ration shop (No. 250) at Allipuram and Karachi Stores in Siripuram junction where consumers told her that toor dal was available at Rs. 143. Ms. Sunitha said the commodity was being made available at the lowest price in Andhra Pradesh. Joint Collector J. Nivas, District Supply Officer Shanta Kumari and other officials of the Civil Supplies Department were present.

Stringent action would be taken if toor dal was sold at a price higher than Rs. 143 a kilo, she said.

Mr. Nivas said that 34 tonnes of toor dal was seized during raids on hoarders.

### **Review meet**

During a review meeting with officials, Ms. Sunitha said that essential commodities must be delivered before 15th of every month and distribution must be perfect and ePass machines used to full extent. “A secret survey is being conducted to know if the commodities are being supplied properly or nor. It is also necessary to give complete details of supply of commodities to the consumers,” she said. Metrology Department was asked to conduct frequent checks at shandies, petrol bunks and weight of LPG refills. Additional SP (vigilance) V.S.R. Murthy, Deputy Controller of Legal Metrology Ranganadhaswamy and other officials were present.

***Toor dal is being sold at the lowest price in Andhra Pradesh***

***P. Sunitha Minister for Civil Supplies***

### **Centre hikes support price of rabi pulses to boost production**

To give a boost to production of pulses, the Centre on Thursday hiked the minimum support price (MSP) of rabi pulses by Rs.250 a quintal and in addition sanctioned a bonus of Rs.75 per quintal for gram and masoor dals.

The MSP of wheat was hiked by Rs.75 to Rs.1,525 per quintal from Rs.1,450 per quintal last season, while the support price for oilseeds were also raised by an average of Rs.250 per quintal.

Announcing these decisions taken at a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Power Piyush Goyal later said that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had approved an increase in the MSP for the rabi season of 2015-16 to be marketed in 2016-17.

The hike of Rs.325 per quintal (including bonus) in the support price of pulses is significant as the prices of tur, urad and moong have sky-rocketed in the retail market due to **huge gap between demand and supply leading to heavy imports**. The support price for masoor is now Rs.3,325 and for gram (chana) Rs.3,425 per quintal.

### **Diwali sweets get a makeover**



### **Diwali Delights: Savour new flavours; Ganache for Da Chocoholics**

*Along with the traditional favourites, there are new sweets on the block that are stylish, sophisticated and delicious, writes PARSHATHY J.NATH*

It's that time of the year when it is all about sweets and nothing about calories. Apart from the usual sugar rush destinations such as Sree Annapoorna Sree Gowrishankar and Sri Krishna Sweets that offer traditional sweets, there are some new players who offer interesting options. "This Diwali, let's be different and let's be responsible", is the catch line at Ranjana Singhal's restaurants. Sweets are packaged in bottles and jars, which are re-usable and are only available on pre-order.

They have smoothies, dessert jars (upside-down fudge, mud soufflé etc) and cake boxes (lemon tea cake, marble cake, etc). The smoothies come in mouth-watering flavours such as Litchi, Ferrero Rocher, Walnut Honey, Chocoholic, Guava and Red Velvet. These are available at On The Go (0422-4520116), That's Y Food (0422-4365117/118) and Café Totaram (0422-4364116/117).

It is Moti Baklavas at Moti Mahal. It is flaky filo pastry stuffed with nuts. The Middle Eastern theme continues with Turkish Delight, golden croissants filled with honey and sugar syrup and topped with palkova and nuts. The restaurant also offers Arabian dates, stuffed with paan and covered in chocolate. The Baklavas and Turkish Delight are priced at Rs 195 a dozen.

Assorted gift boxes come with all the three varieties of sweets, and these are priced at Rs. 450. The gift boxes are re-usable and make pretty jewellery or money boxes. Place your orders at 98438-22003, 0422-4220355 or 96776-22522.

And now for chocolates. Many people are ditching the traditional laddoo-Mysore pak combos for ganache, milk and filled chocolates. Taste exotic fruit flavours at Dark Secrets. Swati Sanjeev offers 16 flavours; raspberry truffle, strawberry, cherry, orange, coffee, cinnamon apple, and so on. Most of them are dark chocolates made to suit the Indian palate.

Except for cherry, all the other fruits are imported from countries such as Belgium and the U.S.A. "No essence, but pure fruit," Swati vouches. These boxes are available in quarter, half-kilo and one kilo boxes.

The relationship between Swati and chocolates is two decades old. "In the first year of my business I made five kilos. Today, I am making at least 500 kilos during the Diwali season. Except for the time I sleep, almost every second I spend in the kitchen, making, packing and dispatching chocolates. I am a one-man army," smiles Swati. You can place orders at 98941-70790.

A few try to cater to both traditional and exotic food sensibilities like Arun Viswanathan of Ganache For Da Chocoholics (Sathyamoorthy Road, Ramnagar). Passion fruit, Gulabi Lassi, Madras Filter Coffee, Saffron Royale, Pink Salt Caramello, Lemon & Pepper...these are the six flavours

for the Diwali gift boxes. “The box has been customised to suit every member in an average Indian family. The Saffron Royale will please the elders because of its auspicious associations. The lemon and pepper flavour will floor the ladies.

I have clients who have purchased them in hordes! And, the children will fall for caramel and fruit flavours,” says Arun.

The Madras Filter Coffee flavour comes with the good-old coffee decoction sans chicory, brewed at Arun’s house.

Arun’s diwali packs come in three sizes – six, 12 and 24 pieces per box, priced at Rs. 240, Rs. 480 and Rs.900, respectively. Arun is available at 99941-26708 or you can visit their site, [www.chocoganache.com](http://www.chocoganache.com)

For details email [chocoholics@chocoganache.com](mailto:chocoholics@chocoganache.com).

Need pretty tins that can double up as sweet boxes and gifts? Check out Shweta Gupta’s collection of Diwali sweets and containers. She has floral tins, flown in all the way from Malaysia. “You can wrap up a muffin or a cupcake in these boxes and gift it to your dear ones,” she says. Pretty kettles with cake pops and edible chocolate gift boxes are some of her other creations! She has boxes with chocolates with impressions of *dias* on them. One bite size cup cakes, red velvet jars, baby chocolates, and chocolate lollypops...Customize your Diwali box by getting an assorted mix. Her goodies are priced between Rs.100 to Rs.1,000. Dial 9188709-99666 or email [shweta@banasonline.com](mailto:shweta@banasonline.com) to place orders!



### **Ready to procure 100 lakh quintals of cotton: Maharashtra federation**

“For the first time, payments are being made to farmers directly into their bank accounts through RTGS/NEFT mode, instead of cheques,” said federation chairman N P Hirani.

The state government Thursday started cotton procurement with three centres, promising to open 17 more Friday. The Maharashtra State Cooperative Cotton-Growers Marketing Federation procured 225 quintals Thursday paying Rs 4,100 per quintal for the best grade cotton.

“For the first time, payments are being made to farmers directly into their bank accounts through RTGS/NEFT mode, instead of cheques,” said federation chairman N P Hirani.

“The move to start centres early had a salutary effect as private traders offered Rs 50 a quintal more to farmers,” Hirani said.

Generally, procurement starts before Diwali to make funds available to farmers for the festive season, but the federation wanted to open it after November 15 this time. The state government, however, prevailed over it to start early. “The area under cotton is 129.71 lakh hectares nationally.

In the state, it is 38.27 lakh hectares this year, as against 41 lakh hectares last year,” Hirani said. He added, “Globally, cotton prices are likely to remain subdued this year. There was a huge carry-forward stock of unsold cotton from last year and the demand was too low from textile mills in the country. This time, prices are expected to rule between Rs 4,100 and Rs 4,400.”

The federation was ready to open up to 96 purchase centres and procure on behalf of the Cotton Corporation of India. “We purchased hardly 27 lakh quintals last year. This time, we are ready to buy up to 100 lakh quintals,” said Hirani.

### **Centre hikes pulses MSP but experts say too little, too late**

The minimum support price (MSP) for the two pulse crops has been raised by Rs 250 per quintal over their levels in the 2014-15 rabi season.

The Centre also hiked the MSPs of rabi oilseeds, mainly rapeseed/mustard, by Rs 250 per quintal.

In a bid to encourage farmers to grow more pulses amidst soaring dal rates, the Centre Thursday increased the procurement price of chana (gram) and masur (lentil) planted in the current rabi season by around 10.5 per cent.



The minimum support price (MSP) for the two pulse crops has been raised by Rs 250 per quintal over their levels in the 2014-15 rabi season. A one-time bonus of Rs 75/quintal has also been granted over and above these, taking the effective procurement price to Rs 3,500 per quintal for chana and to Rs 3,400 per quintal for masur.



An official release after a meeting of the Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs (CCEA) said that the decision taken will “give a strong price signal to farmers to increase acreage and invest for increase in productivity of pulses”.

Experts, however, believe that the hike is too little, too late. Chana is now trading in markets such as Latur and Akola (Maharashtra), Bikaner and Sri Ganganagar (Rajasthan) and Gulbarga (Karnataka) at Rs 4,800- 5,000 per quintal. Wholesale prices of masur are similarly ruling at Rs 5,500-6,000 per quintal in Jabalpur, Sagar, Vidisha and other major mandis of Madhya Pradesh. The MSPs that have been declared are way below the market prices to influence planting decisions of farmers.

“Besides, the MSP fixation should have happened before mid-October, as that is when farmers take a call on which crop to sow. Plantings are already well underway now,” said S Chandra, Director of Indian Society of Agribusiness Professionals, a farm extension consultancy firm. The delay in MSP announcement was attributed to the Bihar Assembly elections, which got over only Thursday.



Significantly, the Centre also raised the MSP of the 2015-16 wheat crop by Rs 75 to Rs 1,525 per quintal. This was more than the Rs 50/quintal annual increase in the last three years. With wheat stocks in the central pool at 32.45 million tonnes as on October 1 — almost 60 per cent more than the necessary level of 20.52 million tonnes — there was apparently a strong view within the government to even freeze the MSP. “But ultimately politics, especially the situation in Punjab where farmers are already agitated over damage to their cotton crop from whitefly attacks, prevailed,” sources said.

Ashok Gulati, former chairman of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices, felt that the MSP increase in wheat will result in farmers producing more wheat, thereby worsening the problem of already overflowing government warehouses.

“We need to move away from fixing MSPs based purely on the supply curve. While farmers’ production costs have, no doubt, gone up, we need to also look at the demand side and encourage them to grow crops that the country really requires today,” he pointed out.

The Centre also hiked the MSPs of rabi oilseeds, mainly rapeseed/mustard, by Rs 250 per quintal. But given the limited governmental procurement operations in pulses and oilseeds, it is the Rs 75/quintal increase in wheat that is seen to be really significant.



### **Centre hikes support price to make farmers grow more pulses**

Faced with soaring prices of dal, the Centre has raised the support price of lentil (masur) and gram (chana) to encourage farmers to grow more pulses in the ongoing rabi season.

The minimum support price (MSP) for these two pulses were raised by Rs 250 per quintal, roughly 8%, and an additional bonus of Rs 75 per quintal will be given to farmers, Union minister Piyush Goyal told reporters after a

meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on Thursday.



“This is expected to give a strong price signal to farmers to increase acreage and invest for increase in productivity of pulses,” Goyal said.

The effective support price of gram would be Rs 3,500 per quintal and masur Rs 3,400 per quintal for the 2015-16 rabi season, which is still well below the open market price, PTI reported.

Sowing of rabi crops begins in October -- which would mean the announcement comes a bit late -- and harvesting starts from April onwards.

Overall, the MSP of six rabi crops -- wheat, barley, gram, masur, rapeseed-mustard seed and safflower seed -- were increased, as recommended by the government’s advisory body Commission for Agriculture Costs and Prices (CACAP).

The MSP of wheat, the main rabi crop, has been increased by Rs 75 to Rs 1,525 a quintal for the 2015-16 rabi season, while that of oilseeds has been increased by Rs 250 a quintal.

MSP is the price at which the government would buy wheat, pulses and oilseeds from farmers. In case of other rabi crops, the government intervenes when the market price falls below the MSP.

The government expects the jump in MSP to encourage cultivation of pulses and reduce dependence on imports. At present, the domestic shortfall in pulses output has led to a rise in retail prices of lentils to around Rs 190 a kg, forcing the government to take several measures to curb price rise.



## THE TIMES OF INDIA

[Tamil Nadu Agricultural University students showcase techniques they learnt](#)

The annual exhibition of techniques and technologies learnt by final year agriculture students during their Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) course was held at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) in Coimbatore on Thursday.

The exhibition was inaugurated by acting vice-chancellor C R Anandakumar and dean (agriculture) S Mahimairaja.

The exhibition, organized by the 96 final year students, was divided into the following villages—Annur, Pollachi South, Anamalai, Gobichettipalayam, Sathiyamangalam, TN Palayam, Bhavanisagar, Madathukulam, Dharapuram and Udumalpet.

While use of natural pesticides and fertilizers by organic farmers and the integrated farming system was highlighted from Annur, the cotton picking and spinning industry from South Pollachi was highlighted.

The water conservation systems and integrated farming systems practised in the coconut farms in and around Anamalai were also highlighted.

During the course, the students spent 60 days in their assigned village, 10 days with an assistant director of agriculture, 10 days with an NGO and another 10 days with an agro industry.

### **Rabi crop sowing gains momentum**

After a not-so-favourable kharif season, sowing of rabi crops has gained momentum in the state.

So far, sowing has been completed on about 27.43 lakh hectares (43%) of the total targeted area of 63 lakh hectares. While areas in Pune, Kolhapur and Aurangabad have reached beyond 50% mark, those in Vidarbha and Nashik are still lagging behind with reports of around 25% sowing till first week of November.

The state agriculture department said rabi sowing will further gain pace after Diwali. "Sowing will be done on the 100% of the rabi area by December. This season is significant for farmers since they suffered a major setback in kharif sowing due to scanty rainfall," the department said.

A senior official from the department said, "Rabi season is most preferred among farmers in the state when over 50 lakh hectares of land is taken up for cultivation. The department has set a target of sowing on 63 to 65 lakh hectares of land during rabi season this year. So far, the progress has been as per our expectations," the official said.

The sowing has not just gained pace, but is also better than was done in the same period last year, the department said. "Around 15-20% more land has been sowed when compared to the same period last year when the process

was delayed because of extended rain in many parts of the state," the department said, adding that many ponds and water sources in rural parts still have water stock which will now be utilized for rabi crops.

Sources in the department said areas for maze, gram and jowar are likely to increase this year. "Sowing of maze and gram will go up in December. There will not be significant rise in sowing of what as it requires plenty of water. In fact, wheat sowing could go down in some areas because of water scarcity. Farmers would compensate with other crops like rabi-jowar," they said.

Sources in the administration have said besides rabi sowing, sugarcane cultivation could go down in the state this year. "This would happen due to scarcity situation that the state is reeling under. Sugarcane is primarily grown in Western Maharashtra and Marathwada region," they said.

## TAKING STOCK

Total targeted area for rabi crop sowing: about 63-65 lakh hectares

Total sown area so far: 23 lakh hectares

Area-wise sowing

Nashik 21%

Pune 52%

Kolhapur 56%

Aurangabad 57%

Latur 45%

Amravati 19%

Nagpur 7%

Konkan NA

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

**Minimum support price for wheat hiked to ₹1,525/quintal**



The Government on Thursday announced an increase in minimum support price (MSP) for key rabi season or winter crops such as wheat, mustard and gram.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved MSP increase of ₹250 a quintal for rabi pulses such as masoor (lentil) and gram in a bid to boost production in the current season which will be marketed in 2016-17.

MSP for gram has been fixed at ₹3,425 a quintal, while that of masur at ₹3,325 for the 2015-16 rabi season.



“Over and above the CACP recommendations, the Cabinet has also decided to give additional bonus of ₹75 a quintal for gram and masoor. This will give some more relief to farmers,” Union Minister Piyush Goyal said.

Wheat MSP has been increased by ₹75 to ₹1,525 a quintal for the 2015-16 rabi season, while the support price for rapeseed-mustard seed has been fixed at ₹3,350 a quintal, an increase of ₹250. Similarly, the MSP for barley has also been increased by ₹75 a quintal to ₹1,225, while that of safflower has been increased by ₹250 a quintal to ₹3,300.

This decision was based on recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

Higher MSPs would increase investment and production through assured remunerative prices to farmers, an official statement added.

### **India to screen GM cotton hybrids after pest attacks**



India will screen genetically modified (GM) cotton hybrids on sale in the country to identify the varieties that are resistant to whitefly, a pest that recently caused extensive damages to crops in two northern states, a government official said.

The whitefly attack on the BT cotton variety in Punjab and Haryana was the first major infestation since India adopted transgenic cotton in 2002. It has stoked worries over the vulnerability of the GM seeds that yield nearly all of the cotton in the world's top producer.

The federal agriculture ministry does not want to take any chances as the pest could thrive and affect nearby farms growing vegetables, said P.K. Chakrabarty, an assistant director general of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.

"Out of the 1,128 hybrids, we have asked to see which have an inherent tolerance to whitefly," Chakrabarty told Reuters on Thursday. "The government will screen the available hybrids and then put up a list. That will sensitise private producers to select suitable hybrids only."

A joint venture of Monsanto with Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Co Pvt Ltd, Kaveri Seeds and Bayer Bioscience Pvt Ltd are among companies allowed to sell GM cotton hybrids in India.

BT cotton was tweaked by scientists at Monsanto to produce its own insecticide to kill bollworms. But two years of drought in India have encouraged the spread of whitefly against which the strain has no resistance.

The government now plans to educate farmers to use only those hybrids that are less vulnerable to whitefly, Chakrabarty said. There is no plan, however, to take any punitive action against the seed companies over the pest attacks.