

Bengaluru roses blossom love in Europe



Five million roses are expected to be exported by February 11

In the romantic boulevards and cafes across Europe when lovers celebrate Valentine's Day, Bengaluru will play its part in blossoming of their love.

More than five million roses from the city are expected to be exported to many countries in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Malaysia, ahead of Valentine's Day.

Bengaluru produces 'Taj Mahal', 'First Red' and 'Grand Gala' varieties that are said to be the best in India. The flowers of the city are said to be of superior quality compared to those grown in Pune.

According to Jayaprakash Rao, general secretary of the South India Floriculture Association, export of red roses began in January-end and will continue till February 11. "We hope to export around five million stems to various countries."

Increased production

He said that the production of roses had increased by 20 per cent and this had caused a slight dip in the prices. “However, the difference in prices is marginal and farmers will be able to make it up as Valentine’s Day coincides with the wedding season here. During the wedding season, demand for roses increases,” he added.

Dr. Rao also said that the roses are grown in the 50-km radius around the city, especially in the Hosur and Doddaballapur belt. While there are around 15 exporters, there are over 50 growers with mid-sized farms and nearly 75 small and marginal farmers who grow roses.

Kangayam bulls line up at Kaalnadai Thiruvizha



Hundreds of farmers and people from Pollachi, Coimbatore, Erode and Tirupur came to Samathur village, located six km from Pollachi, on Friday for a two-day *Kongu Naatu Kaalnadai Thiruvizha* , an event organised by The Vanavarayar Foundation.

Nearly 500 bulls and cows of nine different breeds are participating in the event. A majority of them are the Kangayam cattle.

Other breeds that participated were Mura buffalo (also known as Delhi buffalo), Kerala Vachuri, Tanjore Umalacheri, Tiruchy Kuttai and Lambadi.

The highlight of the first day was a contest organised in 10 different categories for Kangayam bulls, cows and calves. They were judged on characteristics including their physique, hump and over all appearance.

T. Ananthakumar (37) and his cousin S. Senthil Kumar (33), of Reddiyur near Pollachi, who have participated in many rekla races before the sport was banned in May last year, said it has been months since so many Kangayam bulls and calves were brought to a place.

They said that they both have seven bulls that have won many prizes. "We are emotionally attached to the animals and do not mind spending money for its maintenance," they said.

Another feature of the event was the display of seven bullock carts that were used by the family of the Samathur Zamin that portrayed the evolution of carts and the changes made in them during the end of the 19th century and early 20th century.

Interesting among them was a cart resembling a chariot weighing about a tonne that was made and used in the 1880s.

The cart with a covered top has seats that could comfortably accommodate seven persons and has windows too.

According to Shankar Vanavarayar, chairman of the event, bullock carts were the most comfortable mode of transport at that time as horses were not predominantly used in this region.

More competitions and informative programmes will be conducted on the second day of the event. Prizes will be given to the winning animals on that day.

Scrap Private Forest Act: rubber growers

The Kanyakumari District Rubber Growers' Association (KDRGA) demanded the government to scrap the Private Forest Act, which prevents farmers from buying and selling of properties here on Friday.

Addressing an agitation in front of the Forest Ranger's Office, the leaders expressed their concern over the restrictions in the vicinity of Western Ghats Reserve Forest area under the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) in the district.

The Leaders who spoke at the agitation said that restraints in the name of Eco Sensitive Zone cannot be imposed on areas where people already live and work as per the recommendations of the Kasturirangan commission.

They also opposed the proposed move of the forest department to extend Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve to Kanyakumari forests. They were demanding scrapping the Private Forest Act and instead implement the recommendations of the T.S.R. Subramanian Commission's recommendations.

Traders, shops and business establishments downed shutters to show their solidarity with the agitation of the KDRGA on Friday.

The agitation was presided over by S. Nelson, president. C. Balachandran Nair welcomed the gathering. Kumari District Thiruvarul Peravai President Mariya Vincent inaugurated the agitation.

Cutting across party lines, leaders of political parties and peoples' representatives, J.G. Prince, John Jacob, former M.L.A.s R. Leema Rose, D. Kumaradoss, CPI (M) District Secretary N. Murugesan, leaders of Tamil Nadu Tribals Association, Muslim Jamath Imam Lukmanul Hakim, representatives from Traders' Association participated.

The agitation was ended with the address of Padmanabhuram MLA Pushpa Leela Alban.

Where cut-flowers spread pleasant odour



Floriculture unit switched over to cultivation of daisy variety

The colourful flowers that spruce up the décor at Raj Nivas, the Assembly premises or public gardens have their roots in the oblong mud beds of the floriculture nursery in Lawspet.

The Government Horticulture Nursery under the horticulture division of the Agriculture department has traditionally been harvesting orchids and flower

plants for meeting a fraction of the city's booming floral demand that necessitates drawing supplies of the city's ornamental flora from Hosur and Bangalore.

Recently, the floriculture unit switched over to cultivation of the daisy variety of cut-flowers (gerbera) at its semi-controlled polyhouse in Lawspet where fog machines, drip irrigation water tubes and large rotary fans simulate the cool climates of hill stations.

Cultivation of gerbera varieties of cut-flowers is a first not just for the floriculture nursery but for the city as a whole and the horticulture team is already seeing some amazing results, agriculture officers said.

Recently, a team of officers led by R. Mihir Vardhan, Agriculture Secretary and A. Ramamurthy, Agriculture Director, oversaw the planting of the first crop of gerbera cut-flowers at the Botanical Garden, which already has one of the richest collections of rare flora.

"We calibrate the temperature and humidity periodically depending on the weather outside," says Sivakumar, Agriculture Officer at the nursery.

The daily routine for the staff here involves ensuring the right dosage of fertilizers and pesticides, monitoring pH values of soil and electrical conductivity of water and optimising the use of fogging and the fan-and-pad system of evaporative cooling.

The tissue culture derived cut-flower plantlets were largely sourced from private nurseries. Planted on the flower beds a couple of months ago, the flowers were fed uniform doses of fertilizer and water, a process called fertigation, through drip irrigation tubes and nurtured in the ambient temperature within the enclosure.

The six colour variations of gerbera plants, including red, violet and yellow as well as the dual coloured disc- and-rays, are now primed for harvest. "The brightness of the colours, the length of the stalk and the diameter size of the flowers grown here are comparable to premium quality cut flowers," says Mr. Sivakumar.

In fact, the length of the stalk is one of the most important attributes of the ornamental flower and on this count the flowers harvested here boast of an average stalk length of 80 cm as against the normal of 45 cm.

The flower business is one with acutely fluctuating fortunes---a flower that can fetch Rs. 10 during trading peaks will sell for a lowly Rs. 2 when the chips are down.

The hope of making a decent profit is what attracted Hariharasudan from Karuvadikuppam, whose father is a farmer. "I have been engaged in publishing but am looking at the prospects of turning to floriculture," he said.

In fact, one of the core initiatives of the unit is to popularise floriculture among the farmer community, Mr. Sankardas, agriculture officer pointed out.

Hobbyists, for instance, are advised that the cut flower nursery is not ideally suited for terrace-top cultivation. Forget the pricey polyhouses that can cost about Rs. 18 lakh, the investment on a basic open polyhouse is about Rs. 9 lakh while setting up a nursery requires quite a large area.

The 1008 sq metre polyhouse at the Government nursery accommodates 26 rows of about 5,000 plantlets kept in a spacing pattern of each row 60 cm apart from the other and each plant 30 cm away from the next.

While the input cost was about Rs. 1.6 lakh on the plantlets, the yield is tipped to fetch several times that amount. It is estimated that the flower yield from the nursery could be around 10,000 flowers a month.

Farmer harvests fruits of BARC's social initiative



A progressive farmer, who had cultivated a high-yielding drought-resistant groundnut variety, developed by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC),

has harvested over five tonnes of yield, which is 200 per cent more than the harvest being obtained from the local variety.

When the Palayamkottai Central Prison administration cultivated BARC's TG-37A groundnut variety, it harvested bumper yield of 5,600 kg per hectare in June last year. Impressed with the yield, farmer T. Sevlaraj of Kudankulam took a lead role in popularising the variety among his fellow-farmers.

As a goodwill gesture, R. Kanagaraj, Superintendent of Palayamkottai Central Prison gave the groundnut seeds of TG-37 A variety free of cost.

The progressive farmer sowed the seeds in phases on 2.5 acres under the guidance of K. Murugesh, Assistant Director of Agriculture, Radhapuram, and J. Daniel Chellappa, Senior Scientist, Technical Coordination Wing, BARC, Chennai. The harvest of 105-day old crop commenced on Friday.

Mr. Murugesh said a bumper yield of over 5,000 kg per hectare was expected in Kudankulam as BARC's TG37A groundnut variety was far superior to the local variety being traditionally sown by the Kudankulam farmers.

Mr. Daniel Chellappa expressed happiness over the yield. "BARC scientists' hard work in indigenously developing the high-yielding drought tolerant, disease-resistant and early maturing TG37A groundnut variety has started benefiting the farming community of Kudankulam," he said.

Mr. Selvaraj said the TG37A variety was a boon to the local farmers and its large scale cultivation in the region would enhance the livelihood of the Kudankulam villagers.

BARC officials T. Logu, R. Aseema Begum and G. Joy Padma Dinesh were also present.

Sharad Pawar inaugurates Krishi Vigyan Kendra

Nationalist Congress Party president Sharad Pawar has said that caste and political affiliations need to be kept aside when issues concerning farmers and agriculture are raised.

He was here on Friday to participate in the centenary celebrations of KLE Society. Mr. Pawar inaugurated a Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) near Mattikopp in Bailhongal taluk.

Mr. Pawar travelled from Mumbai to Belagavi to inaugurate the kendra despite suffering a fracture in his leg just two months ago and undergoing a surgery. He said he suffered the injury after a fall at his house in Delhi. This was his first public function after the surgery, the former Minister said.

KLES chairman Prabhakar Kore, MP, said the KVK was established at the cost of Rs.12 crore. Bailhongal MLA D.B. Inamdar, Minister for Medical Education Sharan Prakash Patil, KLES President Shivanand Koujalgi, the former Minister Umesh V. Katti, and Suresh C. Angadi, MP, were present.

Later, Mr. Pawar inaugurated a 500-bed KLE Centenary Charitable Hospital on Yellur Road and a convention hall on KLE University campus. Excise Minister Satish Jarkiholi inaugurated a swimming pool while Feroz N. Sait, MLA inaugurated Venudhwani, a Community FM Radio Station on KLEU campus.

Meanwhile, the KLE Society distributing saffron-coloured pens with the name 'NAMO' and the image of Prime Minister Narendra Modi engraved on them has not gone down well with some people here. They were distributed to presspersons. However, some journalists refused to accept them. Not all were happy with Prabhakar Kore, MP, promoting Mr. Modi at a non-political event as all the members of the society are not BJP members.



Maharashtra govt accords high priority to unfinished irrigation projects

rrigation projects worth Rs 4,243 crore that are directly linked to the livelihood of farmers and which could bring a major change in the districts, have remained un-budgeted for the last ten years.

In response the state government has accorded the highest priority to these projects spread across eleven districts mainly in Marathwada and Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

The water resources ministry has given the nod to the proposed projects to be undertaken through financial support from centre and NABARD. The finance department is also working ways to include some aspects of these projects in the state annual budget 2015-16 next month.

Highly placed sources in the ministry revealed, "In the 2015-16 budget, water resources will accord the highest priority to irrigation works which have direct links to farmers livelihood. And it has come to notice that there are irrigation projects worth Rs 4,243 crore which have long remained un-budgeted."

The officials indicated that the annual water resources budget will have its financial constraints as it cannot exceed Rs 10,000 to 12,000 crore. But the ministry of water resources along with ministry of finance are working out ways to raise the funds from the centre and financial institutions to expedite the works.

The statistics revealed by the water resources department shows, "The amount that would be required for completion of last mile projects works to Rs 1,438 crore." The last mile projects are ones which are more than 75 per cent completed and left languishing for lack of funds. The government has given its consent to push these last mile projects which would benefit farmers across 14 districts across Maharashtra.

"The foremost challenge before the state is to increase the irrigation potential for higher agriculture growth and better livelihood for farmers," said Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

At present the total irrigation potential is 49.26 lakh hectares, of which 27.19 lakh hectares is from major irrigation projects, 8.67 lakh hectares from medium irrigation projects and remaining 13.40 lakh hectares is from minor irrigation projects.

State wastes 30% of its fruits and vegetables

Almost 30 per cent of the fruits and vegetables produced by farmers is wasted because of lack of food processing units in the state, a senior agriculture department official said.

The state, with a processing capacity of one lakh metric tonnes, has failed to exploit surplus vegetables and fruits produced in local markets because of shortage of infrastructure like cold storages, processing units and lack of technical know-how to enhance varieties of white onion, tomatoes and winery grapes, the official said.

“Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis held a meeting with officials of NABARD and agriculture and horticulture departments to work out a concrete plan to promote the food processing sector in state,” the official said, adding that they were plans to promote the public-private-partnership model to boost food processing and marketing sectors across the state.

When contacted, Fadnavis said, “We will make a coordinated effort to promote the food processing industry, which has a major potential to generate employment through small-scale sectors. The emphasis on value chain will also ensure better remuneration for farmers get and benefits for consumers.”

According to the state government data, only 1.2 per cent of the fruits and vegetables are processed. While 70 per cent of the fruits and vegetables are consumed while they are fresh, there is a huge wastage of 30 per cent.

The main fruits that are available in the state for primary and secondary processing are grapes, pomegranates, cashew, mangoes and oranges.

“While discussing the state’s roadmap pertaining to food processing industry, stress was laid on upgrading the technical know-how for the farmers to encourage them to produce variety of fruits and vegetables which are essential for processing industry and that can withstand the competitive market in the sector,” sources said. It was also suggested that fruits, pulp juice and concentrate units be set up in MIDC areas.

Sources in the finance department said that while there was a massive market for food processing in Maharashtra, the primary concern related to investment.

“As fruits and vegetables are perishable items, the returns have been low, which often dissuades private players in the sector,” they said.

The CM has said the state will avail benefits of the central scheme which has huge budgetary provision to promote food processing units. The Centre has spelled out the plans for mega food parks. Currently, the state has planned five food parks at a cost of Rs 406 crore.

Give extra compensation, up to 10% of developed land to farmers: SC to UP

In an order that may impact property rates across Noida and Greater Noida, the Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Uttar Pradesh government to shell out additional compensation to farmers whose land had been acquired.

The court also ordered the authorities to hand over developed land to the extent of 10 per cent to the farmers and dismissed a batch of appeals filed by the state government, and Noida and Greater Noida development authorities.

A bench led by Chief Justice H L Dattu refused to interfere with the order issued by the Allahabad High Court in October 2011, and asked the authorities to comply with directions relating to payment of additional compensation and providing developed land.

The court said there was no ground to tinker with the HC order when the acquisition in around 49 villages had been allowed with the condition to pay adequate compensation to the farmers.

“The Act (Land Acquisition Act) is meant for them. The compensation has to be reasonable and the stand of the authorities must be balanced. What the High Court has done appears reasonable to us,” the bench said.

The authorities had also contended that the developed land to be given to farmers should be reduced to 5 per cent for Noida and 6 per cent for Greater Noida. The bench, however, found no merit in these appeals. Raising questions over the UP government's land acquisition policy for development of Noida and Greater Noida, the Allahabad HC had in 2011 quashed the notification for acquisition of land in various villages while ordering enhanced compensation for some other villages.

It had said that "they shall be entitled to payment of additional compensation", which could be "up to 64.70 per cent of the compensation paid earlier" and that the payment shall be ensured by the Noida and Greater Noida Authority at an early date.

Besides, the HC added, "All the petitioners shall be entitled to allotment of developed abadi plot to the extent of 10 per cent of their acquired land subject to maximum of 2,500 sqm."

The Noida and Greater Noida Authority as well as the allottees were further directed not to carry on development and not to implement the Master Plan 2021 till the observations and directions of the National Capital Region Planning Board were incorporated in the Master Plan.

Disapproving of the manner in which land was acquired by invoking the urgency clause in the name of "planned industrial development" but were later sold to private builders, the HC had also ordered the chief secretary to conduct a thorough inquiry

dues: HC issues contempt notices to 10 DMs



The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday issued show cause notice to 10 District Magistrates, mostly in western UP, asking them to explain why contempt proceedings should not be initiated against them for delaying the payment of dues to sugarcane farmers, as per its order passed on September 5 last year. The court has fixed February 25 as the next date of hearing in the matter.

The districts, whose DMs have been issued notices, include Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, Baghpat, Hapur, Ghaziabad, Badaun, Pilibhit, Bahraich, Maharajganj and Kasganj.

A division bench, led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, passed the order while hearing a petition filed by Rashtriya Kisan Mazdoor Sangathan, represented by its general secretary V M Singh, who has been arguing the case in person. The petition has been filed in continuation of the PIL, which dealt with the issue of clearance of sugarcane arrears to the farmers for the financial year 2013-14.

Singh said: "Through this fresh petition, we had brought to the notice of the court that not only the dues were not cleared by October 31, but also the deadline was extended to November 20 by the administration on their own. Further, still dues of over Rs 700 crores remain unpaid. We also brought it before the court that banks were being given preference, while the farmers were still waiting for their

dues. The court then issued show cause notices as to why contempt proceedings not be initiated against them for violating court orders.”

Chief Standing Counsel, Ramesh Upadhyaya, who represented the state, confirmed the issuance of the show cause notice. However, he refused to elaborate saying a detailed order was yet to become available.

Among various orders passed on this issue, on September 5, 2014, the court had directed the state government to clear all the sugarcane dues to farmers by October 31. The court had also directed the DMs concerned to get the stock of sugar, in possession of various sugar mills, sold and use the proceeds in clearing the dues. It had also said that the farmers will have the first claim over the proceeds and not the banks, as claimed by the mill owners.

Farmers' demand helps PMC dispose of wet garbage but dry waste yet to be taken care of

After supplying waste to farmers around the city for manure, the civic administration has extended the service to kiln manufacturers, jaggery units and small industries that need heat generated from combustion material. The service is rendered for free within 75 km from the city limits.

“The PMC has restarted the service of providing wet garbage on demand to farmers around the city limits. There is a good response to it as only segregated waste is being supplied,” said joint municipal commissioner Suresh Jagtap.

The civic administration had been supplying around 250 tonnes of wet waste everyday to farmers as per their demand, he said, adding that this had helped the civic body to effectively dispose of the waste at a time when there were problems with open dumping being prohibited at the Uruli Devachi landfill site.

Now, the civic administration is exploring ways to dispose dry waste. “We want those using fuel to generate heat in their units to use the dry combustible waste for the purpose. Thus, the owners of brick kiln, jaggery units and small industries, that have heat furnaces, have been urged to use dry waste as fuel,” Jagtap said.

The PMC service would be for free and delivered at their doorstep within 75 km from civic body boundary, he added. Here it may be recalled that the agitation launched in the first week of January was withdrawn after villagers were convinced that the civic body would soon make arrangements to process garbage. Due to lack of space and a proper plan, the PMC is yet to cater to the need to dispose 35 per cent of waste generated every day – mainly from the suburbs.

Meanwhile, the Pune Municipal Corporation (PMC), while shifting its focus on decentralising garbage processing, has invited private companies to start small capacity processing units for organic and inorganic waste on civic land. “The civic administration has been working on setting up units with processing capacity of 2, 3, 5 and 10 tonne per day,” Jagtap said, adding that the technology used by the private agency should be environment friendly, economically viable and comply with the municipal solid waste guidelines.

The unit should be set up within two months, while the operation and maintenance of the unit should be done by the agency for five years from the commissioning of the project. The product and by-product will be the ownership of the agency running the unit.

The plan is to set up at least one unit in each electoral ward. The corporators had been urged to cooperate with the civic administration to decentralise garbage processing, he added. “The demand for wet waste by farmers will end during monsoon and the civic body has to set up the small processing plants across the city before that,” Jagtap said. *continued...*

Jackfruit: A fruit, a vegetable and everything in between

The one thing that anyone travelling across Kerala just cannot miss is the jackfruit tree as it is tall and well spread. On most occasions, one can see the greenish-yellow jackfruit hanging in adequate numbers – not surprising as this is by far the largest tree-borne fruit.

Over the years this fruit still maintains its status as one that is affordable to all and can be consumed raw or ripe.

Each jackfruit weighs from three to 30 kilograms.

Believed to have originated in the country's southwestern rain forests, the word jackfruit comes from Portuguese jaca, which in turn, is derived from the Malayalam word chakka.

In common parlance, chakka is often referred to as the pre-ripe form and the fragrance of the fleshy jackfruit is first noticed by squirrels and the birds. The ripe form is called chakka pazham.

In Kerala the two most commonly found variety are 'koozha', which is not much in demand as 'varikka' which of late has become a much sought after one.

Molly Thomas, an 80-year-old grandmother from Thiruvalla, said this is one food item that was once the succour of many people, especially the labour class.

"I remember that when work was difficult to come by during the rainy season, my father-in-law used to allow the the labour class to cut the near-ripe jackfruit. The mashed jackfruit, prepared with grated coconut and spices, is not only mouth-watering but also quite a filling meal. Also, the tasty chips prepared from jackfruit is a hit among one and all," Thomas told IANS.

The process of weaning out the pieces after cutting open the jackfruit is a laborious one and is very messy because of the sticky white fluid that oozes out, but for experienced people, it's child's play.

The seed or 'chola' inside each fleshy piece is also used for making excellent dishes. One of the most popular ones is when it's mixed with raw mango and coconut paste and for a curry called 'chakkakuru manga' that is eaten with steaming rice.

"When eaten with typical Kerala fish curry, mashed jackfruit is second to none. We have now started promoting this among the foreign tourists who opt for home stays," Jacob Punnen, who rents out rooms in Kottayam, told IANS.

Today, the koozha variety is not much in demand and householders find it difficult to dispose it off because after it ripens and falls, it's a big messy affair with lots of flies and birds feeding on it. The varikka variety of a jackfruit is available at a fancy price of Rs.150 upwards.

“We have both varieties of jackfruit. Of late, it’s buyers from Tamil Nadu who come and buy the varikka variety. They do not want the koozha variety. They rip us off as while we get around Rs.10 for a varikka jackfruit, we are told that they sell it from above Rs.100. See, if we do not sell it for Rs.10 per piece, then it will become food for the birds and squirrels. Another problem [*continued...*](#)”

Nutrient facts



Having decontrolled petrol and diesel, the government’s next focus is on containing fertiliser subsidies. Key to this is decontrol of urea and ushering in a system of crediting subsidy payments directly into the bank accounts of farmers. HARISH DAMODARAN explains the existing subsidy regime and the road ahead.

What’s so special about urea decontrol?

Urea is the only fertiliser whose maximum retail price (MRP) is still fixed by the government, with imports also permitted only through designated state trading enterprises. Moreover, there is a significant domestic industry in urea. In 2013-14, production at 22.72 million tonnes far exceeded imports of 7.09 Mt. This is unlike for other fertilisers, where India is 100 per cent import-dependent either for the final product (muriate of potash or MOP) or raw materials/intermediates (rock

phosphate, sulphur and ammonia for manufacture of di-ammonium phosphate or DAP).

What does decontrol entail?

Decontrol would mean allowing the MRP for urea to be market-determined, as it is with other fertilisers. Besides, there will be no import restrictions. Anybody can import urea, not just MMTC, STC or Indian Potash Ltd.

The government has already, since April 2010, freed non-urea fertilisers from price controls, following which the MRP of DAP has gone up from Rs 9,350 to around Rs 23,000 a tonne, and of MOP from Rs 4,455 to Rs 16,650. During the same period, the MRP of urea has been raised only marginally from Rs 4,830 to Rs 5,360 a tonne. In the event of price decontrol of urea, farmers would obviously end up paying much more for it as well.

The impact of decontrol on the industry would be mainly on account of imports. The landed price (cost plus freight) of imported urea in India is currently about \$300 a tonne, which is lower than the average of \$322 in 2013-14 and \$413 the year before. On the other hand, the average production cost for domestic plants is roughly Rs 18,000 or \$ 290 per tonne, ranging from a low of Rs 11,000 to as high as Rs 41,000. In a free import regime, the high-cost units may face closure.

But why protect inefficient manufacturers? Also, if farmers are already paying more for other fertilisers, would they not be able to absorb similar price rises in urea?

The second question first. Urea has a disproportionately high share — over 55 per cent — in India's total fertiliser consumption. A wheat farmer typically applies 2.5 bags (125 kg) of urea per acre over the full cropping period, compared to just one bag (50 kg) of DAP and half a bag (25 kg) of MOP. He is, therefore, that much more sensitive to an increase in the *continued...*

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Venkaiah Naidu pitches for lifting restriction on agriculture movement

HYDERABAD: Union Minister M Venkaiah Naidu today raised the pitch for lifting restrictions on the movement of agricultural produce in the country.

Speaking after presenting the prestigious 5th M S Swaminathan Award to senior agricultural scientist Surender Lal Goswami at a function here, Naidu said why is there an exception for food grains while items like watches and garments are even being allowed for exports.

Every other item in the country is easily movable but agricultural produces are unfortunately not allowed to be moved. Restrictions on food grains movement (within the country) have to be removed," he said.

The minister for Urban Development also stressed the need for new and yield-enhancing seeds, technologies and methodology aimed at making farming profitable.

The M S Swaminathan Award, jointly instituted by Retired ICAR Employees Association and Nuziveedu Seeds Ltd, is confe ..

Agricultural ties with Israel helping Indian farmers

NEW DELHI: Israel is quietly intensifying its cooperation with Indian agriculture, helping farmers multiply their income with better practices, yields and choosing the right crops or vegetables in a success story that is boosting bilateral ties that have strengthened under the Narendra Modi government

Farmers are already reporting successes in places such as Haryana, where Israeli farm technology has helped farmers in about 500 acres to switch to vegetables and floriculture. They are making much more money and the farms are gaining from diversification.

Manoj Bhatia's income has multiplied tenfold by planting vegetables in polyhouses under controlled conditions. "I earn a net profit of Rs 7-8 lakh per year from vegetables grown in polyhouses. By growing wheat and rice I earned Rs 70,000 to Rs 1 lakh only," said Bhatia, a farmer from village Mohiuddinpur in

Karnal district. He cultivates vegetables on 30 acres including 3 acres in polyhouses. He moved out of commercial wheat and rice planting two years ago.

Israeli expertise has reached farmers from Haryana to Maharashtra with nine demonstration farms already operating and another 20 in the pipeline. Dan Alluf, Counselor, International Development cooperation, Science and Agriculture, Embassy of Israel in India said more demonstration farms are being added in the first two phases of the plan. "In our phase-3, (2015-18) we will plan along with the National Horticulture Mission and Indian agriculture ministry, to grow in both scale and fields of act ..

Farmers have gained enormously. "I have started to dream big and different. I now want to use solar power for irrigation, as electricity is a big challenge and also use coco pits rather than the deteriorating soil for planting," says Arun Kumar from village Maloli village in Rai tehsil of Sonapat.

His life changed after visiting the centre of excellence in Karnal district. "I already had drip irrigation and was planning to set up a polyhouse. The centre however, opened a can of knowledge for us from better utilization of irrigation, fertilizer, farm machinery, managing data, training on sowing, harvesting and marketing on a regular basis," says Kumar who now has 6 poly houses.

The Indo Israel agriculture project (IIAP) initiated in 2008 operates through centres of excellence that aim to help horticulture with crop diversity, productivity and recourse use efficiency by implementing Israeli technology and know-how. Apart from horticulture crops, centres for cut flower and seed production, bee keeping and dairy have also come up in the country.

Demand at home pushes flower prices to record high despite fall in Valentine export demand

A significant spike in domestic demand has pushed flower prices to historic highs, helping growers and traders more than overcome a fall in rose exports to Europe for Valentine's Day.

Industry insiders say that a slew of high-profile weddings, visit of US President Barrack Obama and overlapping of the wedding season with Valentine's Day have helped flower prices go up by about 30% over the last three months despite a fall in the Russian currency, impacting exports ahead of Valentine's. About 10% fall in Valentine's export has hit other flower exporters such as Ecuador, Kenya

and Colombia, even forcing farmers in Kenya to crush flowers to manure in the absence of a good domestic market.

"Indian farmers have not only been saved, but they are getting handsome returns due to all-time high flower prices in the domestic market," said Praveen Sharma, president, Indian Society of Floriculture Professionals. Growers have been getting farm gate price for rose stems in the range of Rs 5-10 each, depending on the length of the stem, against Rs 3-6 just three months ago. Export prices of rose stems are now between Rs 8 and Rs 18, compared to Rs 6-14 in the year-ago period. Sharma said the ..

January natural rubber imports jump 47% y-o-y

MUMBAI: India's natural rubber imports in January jumped 47 per cent from a year earlier to 30,441 tonnes as lower prices in world markets prompted tyre makers to increase overseas purchases, an official with the state-run Rubber Board said today.

India imported 359,857 tonnes of natural rubber from April to December, higher than the previous financial year's 325,190 tonnes, said the official, who declined to be named.

The south Asian country imports natural rubber from Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Natural rubber price in the Indian market was more than 40 per cent higher than Malaysia or Indonesia in January, said a Kochi-based dealer.

Famed Kashmir apples flourish in the warmth of Karnataka

MANGALURU MADIKERI: Can a temperate fruit like the apple be tamed to grow in the tropics? That it's a distinct possibility has been shown by Mandi-based senior fruit scientist Chiranjit Parmar, with help from a few farmers in the state. Though experimentation is still at the trial stage without reaching commercial production, it has opened up new possibilities to challenge the dominance of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh over this fruit.

But what's interesting is that Himachal apple saplings planted here are in a confused state! While apple trees bear fruit in five or six years in Kashmir and

Himachal Pradesh, they've started flowering and bearing fruit within two years of planting, in Bengaluru and Somwarpet in North Kodagu

In Dakshina Kannada, retired banker Krishna Shetty is still waiting to savour the fruits of his labour. "They've started flowering. I should be able to harvest apples next year," he says. The prolonged monsoon and pest attack here have stopped them from yielding the desired results, he adds. Shetty planted 50 saplings at his farm in Hirebandady , near Uppinangady

He said the plant can be grown in regions where the temperature ranges between 10 degree Celsius and 30 degree Celsius. "In Indonesia, growers prune leaves and get about 60 tonnes of apples per hectare. In our country, pruning is not done and the yield is limited to 6 tonnes per hectare. After three years, the yield is still limited. I need further guidance from scientists," he said.

Calistha D'Silva from Abburkatte, Somwarpet, who planted seven trees three years ago, says one of them bore fruit within the second year, and without much care. "If I'd taken care, they may have yielded better results," he said. "The fruits were small, but tasty . Parmar, who visited my farm, said the trees have achieved tremendous growth, which would take six years in Himachal." This year, he's planting eight trees in his garden. Nagananda K from Mahalakshmi Layout, Bengaluru, has three apple tr ..

Read more at:

What started this experimentation was Parmar's visit to Batu, Indonesia, which has acquired the reputation of an apple-producing region. After getting inputs from farmers there, Parmar started thinking of the possibilities of repeating this in parts of South India. Shetty says the absence of winter helps growers here get two crops a year, unlike in Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh. During his visit to the UK in 2010, Shetty saw apple trees in house yards. "I started thinking, why not at my home... T ..

Shetty gets his supply of plants from Himachal Pradesh, and a consignment of 2,500 saplings of five varieties reached him on Monday . "...We've sought inputs from the University of Agricultural Sciences, horticulture department, to find out which variety is suitable for commercial cropping. But there's been no response," adds Shetty.



TIMES OF INDIA

Experts to teach tricks of trade at IMA conclave

INDORE: Indore Management Association's two-day international management conclave will commence on Friday. Being organized under the theme, 'India 2.0-tryst with destiny', the conclave will be held at Abhay Prashal.

Conclave chairman Ritu Grover said, "At least 14 lectures would be delivered on advance space techniques, corporate management, business digitalization, corporate governance, finance management, economy, defense, spirituality, politics and governance."

"Aiming to provide an international level platform to students and speakers, we are making use of the best technology. A 360-degree rotating stage has been erected, besides a special screen is being used this time. All lectures would be uploaded on YouTube."

ISRO former chairman K Radhakrishnan will be conferred with Lifetime Outstanding Innovation Award whereas Bajaj Group chairman Rahul Bajaj will be awarded Lifetime Achievement Award. Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev lecture on 'inner engineering' will be organized on February 7.

Experts will teach tricks of better management to participants. Industrialists from the fields of IT, agriculture, hospitality, electronics, education, reality, retail, medical services, heavy industries are set to attend the event.

"The event will give students a platform to explore newer opportunities," said Grover.

Aiming to provide an international level platform to students and speakers, best technology is being used. A 360-degree rotating stage has been erected, besides a special screen is being used this time.

Farmers, wards to get reservation in agri varsity courses

SHIMLA: Palampur-based Himachal Pradesh Agricultural University (HPAU) on Thursday proposed to reserve 20% seats over and above quota for the farmers and wards of farmers in BSc agriculture and BVSc and animal husbandry courses.

HPAU vice-chancellor K K Katoch said that board of directors (BoD) of the university had approved this proposal on Thursday and university would now forward the proposal for the approval of state government. He said that university intends to introduce this reservation for the farmers and their wards from next academic session.

"But much would depend on the government," he said. Interacting with mediapersons at Shimla after the BoD meeting of the varsity, Katoch said that persons, who have total dependence on agriculture for income, would be considered for this reservation..

Katoch said that BoD has also decided to curtail routine expenditure and raise the income of the university. The university proposed to raise its annual income from Rs 10.5 crores to Rs 35 xrores over a period of 10 years.

For the next academic session, the prospectus of the university for various entrance examinations would be available online thus saving it around Rs 6-7 lakh. It would also commercialize its technical services and start the system of having oral exams and viva through video-conferencing to cut short expenses on TA/DA of the experts. Three units of video-conferencing would be established in the varsity. "It would help the university engage experts from outside the country too," he added.

HPAU had already set up central purchase and disposal unit to curtail expenditures and bring accountability. Its logo for all the products had been changed from Palam to HimPalam as Palam was already registered in Gujarat. He said that keeping in view the global angle, the logo on the letter head of the university would henceforth be used in Hindi as well as English. "It is CSKHPKV in Hindi and it would be CSKHAPU in English," he said.

Katoch said the stipend of the students of the varsity who go for industrial training and rural awareness in the last year had been increased from Rs 1,500 to 2,500 per month (agriculture), Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 per month (home science) and Rs 3,000-4,500 for (veterinary sciences). He said an international coordination cell was being established for exchange of students and the varsity had decided to implement the scientist recruitment board (ICAR) scorecard for screening and appointments of scientists, henceforth.

Keeping in view the demand, HPAU proposed to start a veterinary pharmacists training institute. "We will send the proposal for the approval of the state government. We wish to open it in Una, but the same would be finalized by the government." He said that BoD had given approval to promotion of 92 teachers. In all, 250 teachers and 91 non-teachers had been promoted in last year.

Bring agri research into practice: CM

Akola: Maharashtra chief minister Devendra Fadnavis has opined that agriculture sector can usher in development only when research on papers is brought into practice. However, he said, there is hardly any dialogue between universities and farmers on this issue.

Addressing the convocation of Dr Panjabrao Deshmukh Agriculture University here, Fadnavis said that the farmers' suicides in Maharashtra was the biggest challenge. He said he tried to find answers to the challenge and some remedies were being enforced. Production should have been increased by reducing cost to bring agriculture in profit, he said.

Kisanji Lawande, ex-vice chancellor BSKKV, Dapoli, said that agriculture education was the mandate of all the state agriculture universities in the country. It was now necessary to modify the present education system.

Dr Ravi Prakash Dani, VC, PDKV, Akola threw light on development and progress of the institution.

DECCAN Chronicle

India gets global aid for solar plants

New Delhi: India could start installing 20,000 megawatts of solar power capacity as early as April after companies pledged to support the government's drive for clean energy, an official said. Details of the plan, which has drawn commitments from the US, German and Chinese companies, will be announced soon, said Upendra Tripathy, secretary of the ministry of new and renewable energy.

"We have got commitments from very established industry, both foreign and domestic for the next year," he said in an interview at his office. Foreign companies will be allowed to decide where they manufacture the required equipment, he said.

The rapidly falling cost of solar power, which is expected to reach parity with conventional energy by 2017, has ignited interest in its potential in India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has looked to industry for help in funding what could be a \$100 billion expansion in clean energy.

For its part, the government will have to find the land required to build the solar panels on. Modi aims to make India one of the world's largest renewable energy markets, targeting 100,000 MW of output by 2022 from just 3,000 MW currently. Despite more than 300 days of sunshine a year, India relies on coal for three-fifths of its energy needs while solar supplies less than one per cent.

THE HINDU
Business Line

[Will there be a global grain glut again?](#)

After two successive years of generally benign weather that triggered a massive expansion of grains crop harvest, traders are beginning to wonder about supply possibilities in 2015 and by implication price performance of major agricultural crops.

Will the world once again witness a supply surge for the third year in a row? To be sure, inventories of major crops (wheat, corn, oilseeds and others) around the world have been rising in recent months following massive harvests and a modest slowdown in demand growth.

No wonder, prices have come under pressure; and the south-bound movement has been accelerated by the combination of strengthening of the dollar and low crude oil prices.

The latter is expected to push production costs down through the synthetic fertiliser route, mechanisation and transport costs. Additionally, across the board, commodity prices have been falling, and agriculture crops are too vulnerable to defy the price gravity.

Although the current and emerging situation poses a tough challenge to forecast prices, it is clear that there is increasing pressure on the supply side of market to respond to low prices.

So, the big question is whether 2015 will witness a 'supply response to low prices of 2013 and 2014'.

On current reckoning, given the large inventory as well as currency, crude oil and weather outlook, one can expect grain prices to trend lower in the first half of the year. By implication, barring major adverse weather events, agricultural prices will continue to remain consumer-friendly and food inflation modest.

Normally, there is the usual supply response to low prices. The negative margin environment of the last few months is sure to discourage growers, especially in countries with industrialised farming.

One can expect growers to destock and reduce outlay on inputs such as seeds, fertilisers and agro-chemicals.

This can potentially hurt yields and in turn translate to a reduction in grain supplies (mainly wheat and corn) in the upcoming season.

In contrast, soyabean enjoys a great chance to buck the trend. In the US and elsewhere, corn acreage may shift to soyabean because of inventory pressure and less-attractive prices of corn (less than \$4/bushel). On the other hand, robust soya export in recent months has ensured attractive revenues. So, one can expect higher planted area and one more year of strong surplus. Simply put, in terms of prices, soyabean is expected to underperform.

From a currency perspective, the dollar will continue to remain strong, but further gains would be rather slow.

The world crude market is likely to begin to rebalance from the third quarter of the year and possibly there could be some price recovery. Weather is big known-unknown.

If geopolitical instabilities and weather aberrations combine, the outlook for agricultural markets will get murky.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated February 7, 2015)

Kerala revamps husk buying scheme

Kochi, February 6:

The Kerala government has announced an overhaul of its husk procurement scheme to meet a long-standing demand from the coir industry to address shortage of raw materials.

The new scheme will equip workers in the sector to create a vast procurement network through various incentives and utilise as much of the 600 crore of coconut husk that the State produces annually, Adoor Prakash, Kerala's Revenue Minister said.

The shortage of coconut husk, the basic raw material for coir production, is one of the biggest challenges faced by Kerala. Schemes were introduced in 2010 and 2012 to streamline husk procurement, but they have not yielded the desired results. Under the new scheme, individuals who bring raw husk for processing at accredited fibre making units will be given incentive at the rate of 25 paise for every green husk and 15 paise for dry husk.

Coir cooperatives who procure the husk directly or through agents will be provided transport costs of Rs.250 for every 5,000 husks and Rs. 50 for every additional 1,000 husks.

Workers in cooperatives that use de-fibering machines will receive, in addition to their wages, incentives at the rate of Rs. 160 for every 400 green husks they procure and Rs. 20 for every additional 50 husks. For dry husk, the rate will be Rs. 150 for every 600 dry husks and Rs. 25 for every addition 100 husks. The government will also subsidise coir fibre at Rs. 3/kg for green husk and Rs. 2 for dry husk.

India, Lebanon pact soon on lower import duty on agri produce

Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh has urged Lebanon to invest in Mega Food Parks and cold chain infrastructure in India and promote information exchange on processing techniques for fruits and vegetables.

He met a delegation led by his counterpart Akram Chehayeb here on Friday.

The two discussed measures to enhance bilateral agricultural trade and to trade “agricultural items such as fresh potatoes and tomatoes, durum wheat and sugar in which India has potential to export,” according to an official statement.

“Lebanon is looking to export honey, olive oil, wines and fruits like apples and grapes. Poultry is another sector where exports can be increased,” said Henri Atallah, one of Chehayeb’s Advisors.

Import duty issue

Atallah said that to work around the issue of high import duties in India, particularly for wines (upwards of 152 per cent) and on refined olive oil (15 per cent) that Lebanon wanted to export, the two Governments are working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

This, he expects, will be finalised soon along with simplified visa procedures.

“Customs duties here work out to nearly 220 per cent for us and we’re hopeful of that changing since India is a significant market with large elite that appreciates good wine,” said Zafar Chaoui, Chairman, Lebanese Wine Makers Association.

Grapes & wine

Chaoui said that despite only nine million bottles being produced each year, Lebanon exports nearly 45 per cent to more than 32 countries at prices ranging between \$5 and \$50.

“We have superior quality grapes including the indigenous Obedieh which is among the oldest varieties on Earth. Thus, the wine is different and we are extremely interested in selling to India,” he said.

India’s exported \$69.41 million worth of agricultural goods to Lebanon in 2013-14 while importing commodities amounting to \$0.47 million.

Karnataka sees a rush to set up sugar mills

Even as the existing sugar mills are struggling to survive battling high cane costs and lower product prices, Karnataka – the third largest producer of the commodity in the country – could see over 50 new units come up over the next few years.

The State has received some 14 applications from companies for setting up new units, said HS Mahadeva Prasad, Minister for Co-operation and Sugar, said in a written reply to the State Assembly on Friday.

Besides, 40 companies have already received the Industrial Entrepreneur Memorandum (IEM), an approval from the Centre for their proposed new units and expansion of their existing capacities.

New units

Karnataka has some 74 sugar units of which some 63 are operational currently, while the rest have stopped operations for various reasons.

Six of the 11 mills that have stopped operations are in the private sector, the Minister said.

Prominent among those that have already received IEMs for new plants include Godavari Bio Refineries Ltd for its proposed unit at Koujalgi in Belagavi and Bannari Amman Sugars for its new unit at HD Kote in Mysuru district.

Majority of the proposed new units are in the northern districts of Belagavi, Vijayapura, Bagalkot, Kaluburagi and Raichur.

Also, the southern districts of Mysuru and Mandya are also expected to see new units come up over the next few years.

Cane acreage in Karnataka has increased from around 4.16 lakh hectares (lh) in 2006-07 to around 4.9 lh in the current 2014-15 season.

Sugar production has increased from 26.74 lakh tonnes (lt) in 2006-07 and is projected to reach 44 lt in the current season.

Acreage, output rises

According to the Indian Sugar Mills Association, sugar production in the State stood at 22.2 lt till end-January, while the sweetener output in the country for the period was 15 per cent higher at 134.83 lakh tonnes.

Payment issue

Prasad said that the sugar mills are making payments to farmers for the 2014-15 season and the Sugarcane Board so far has not received any complaints on the delay in cane payments beyond 14 days.

He said the Government has taken all steps to protect farmers' interest in the State.

However, the cane growers alleged that the State government was not taking enough steps to make them realise their payments for the current as well as previous season.

Sugar mills in Karnataka owe about Rs. 1,800 crore to the growers for the 2013-14 season, said Kurbur Shantakumar, President of the State Cane Growers Association.

Even for the current season, the arrears have started building up and are currently around Rs. 400 crore as majority of the mills are not even paying the fair and remunerative price (FRP) fixed by the Centre within 14 days, Shantakumar said.

In a bid to highlight their plight and secure their payments, cane growers have decided to stage massive protest and launch indefinite strike in Bengaluru from February 9, Shantakumar said.

