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# THE HINDU

## **Water released from Thirumoorthy dam**

To enthuse the farmers in the Zone-3 of Parambikulam Aliyar Project area opt for second crop during the ongoing rabi season, the Public Works Department (Water Resources Organisation) released water from Thirumoorthy dam on Sunday.

PWD (WRO) officials told *The Hindu* that 6,809 million cubic feet of water would be released through Parambikulam Main Canal, Udumalpet Canal and High Level Canal to irrigate a total of 94,362 acres over four wetting cycles with each cycle lasting 17 days. There would be a gap of five to seven days in between the various cycles. The water release would be benefiting the farmers in Udumalpet, Madathukulam, Dharapuram, Palladam, Tirupur and Kangayam taluks in Tirupur district and Pollachi and Sulur taluks in Coimbatore district.

The water level at the dam was 58.64 feet against the total of 60 feet at the time of opening shutters at 9 a.m. on Sunday. Joint Director of Agriculture P. Santhanakrishnan said that the department had suggested the farmers to opt for maize and pulses utilising the water released as the summer spells were fast approaching.

“These two crops can be harvested in shorter duration and are less water intensive. The farmers will have to depend entirely on the canal water as the district would not get any more rain prior to the summer season,” he pointed out.

## **Millet processing facility opened in Sivarakottai**

A common facility for processing millets, established at a cost of Rs 5 lakh, was inaugurated at Sivarakottai on Sunday.

Tirumangalam MLA M. Muthuramalingam and Agriculture Director M. Rajendran dedicated the facility, comprising de-huller and de-stoner units, to farmers who have been encouraged to raise millets under a promotion programme.

The common facility has been established as farmers get higher returns by selling processed grains.

A total of 300 acres of land in Sivarakottai, Karisalkalanpatti, Sengapadai, Myittanpatti and Vellakulam have been brought under

‘varagu’ and ‘kuthiraivaali’ cultivation under the State-Balanced Growth Fund scheme.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Muthramalingam said people of older generations were hale and healthy as a large part of their diet comprised millets. Now, people were suffering from diabetes and hypertension ever since they took to eating ‘rice.’ The millets, while giving better returns to the farmers, ensured a disease-free life to those who consumed them, he added. Mr. Rajendran said since millets had medicinal properties, tribal people who still ate them, had a healthy body and better eyesight. He said 150 more millet processing machines would be given across Tamil Nadu. Joint Director A. Jayasingh Gnanadurai said a rice mill owner, who was bedridden due to diabetes, had become active after he switched over to eating millets. A farmer’s outlet to sell processed millets would be set up along the highway, he said.

Assistant Director G.Sv. Amuthan said the machines could process 100 kg of millets in an hour. Several farmer groups had been formed to run the unit. “Any farmer can make use of them for processing millets at a nominal cost,” he said.

### **Farmers get good price at turmeric auction**

The weekly auction of turmeric held at the Tiruchengode Agricultural Producers Cooperative Society on Saturday fetched a sales turnover of Rs. 2.05 crore.

Farmers of Salem and Namakkal districts brought more than 2,500 bags of turmeric for the auction.

While ‘Virali’ manjal fetched a price ranging between Rs. 7,639 and Rs. 9,899 per quintal, the ‘Kizhngu’ manjal fetched a price between Rs. 6,438 and Rs. 8,699 and the ‘Panangali’ manjal fetched a price between Rs. 9,767 and Rs. 12,689 at the auction.

The farmers said that they managed to get Rs. 350 more per quintal in Tiruchengode society auction compared to other turmeric markets.

### **Farmers honoured**

Speakers at a function to honour farmers on the occasion of ‘Pongal’ festival, organised under the auspices of Thilagavathiar Tiruvarul Peravai on Saturday, hailed farmers for contributing to the country’s overall growth. They glorified the hard work of farmers and farm labourers for producing food.

K.T. Rajagopal, former District Revenue Officer, and P. Annamalai, auditor, voiced concern over conversion of agricultural land into real

estate for marketing housing lay-outs. Although industrial growth was a welcome measure, it should not be at the cost of agricultural productivity, he said.

S. Subbiah, a physician, and S. Ramadoss, founder of Ponmari Group of Educational Institutions, spoke on the efforts taken by farming community in producing food. Crop protection strategy has to deal with a wide range of challenges.

R. Vairavan, president of Chenduran group of educational institutions, said the annual function was a token of gratitude to farmers.

Dayananda Chandrasekaran, pontiff of the Peravai, said the farmers were selected at random during a tour of villages. Those working in the fields under scorching sun were identified for the honour. So far, about 220 farmers including 60 women have been honoured in the eight festivals including the current year celebrations.

### **Harvest of sugarcane begins**

*There is a drop in sugarcane cultivation, says official*



Sweet festival: Farm labourers carrying harvested sugarcane at Tiruvalarcholai near Tiruchi on Sunday.— Photo: B.Velankanni Raj  
Harvest of sugarcane, meant for use during Pongal festival celebration, cultivated in a small area in villages around Tiruchi, is in full swing.

Farmers in Ponnurangam, Thiruvallarcholai and other villages started harvesting the sugarcane on Sunday.

Ramu, a farmer of Ponnurangam, said he had cultivated the sugarcane on an acre of land. It fetches Rs. 15 this year based on its size while it was just Rs. 10 or Rs. 12 last year. “A bundle of 10 canes is sold for Rs. 150 to Rs. 180 this year,” he said adding that he was sending the bundles to Coimbatore in a lorry for sale.

According to S. Mathiyalagan, Joint Director of Agriculture (in charge), Tiruchi district, this variety of sugarcane is cultivated in a very small area. While the total area of cultivation of all types of sugarcanes is 1,650 hectares, cultivation of this variety of sugarcane, meant for Pongal festival, stands at just two per cent, he said. Besides, there was a drop in sugarcane cultivation since many people had shifted to cultivation of banana, he added.

### **Millets save fertile lands from extinction**



Where industries were planned: Various crops raised on rain-fed land in Sivarakottai speaks volumes about soil fertility in the region.—  
Photos: G. Moorthy and R. Ashok

*Claiming them as ‘dry land,’ the then State government planned industrial park there in 2008*

In July last year, the State government allotted a subsidy Rs 6 lakh for promoting cultivation of minor millets to overcome economic backwardness of the villagers in rain-fed Kalligudi block.

The scheme, under the State Balanced Growth Fund, benefited 322 farmers and 78 farm hands when the Department of Agriculture promoted

cultivation of millets, 'kuthiraivaali' and 'varagu.' As the crops have reached the state of harvesting now, the farmers of Sivarakottai, Swamimallampatti and Karisalkalampatti raise a pertinent question over the choice of land for the scheme.

Did the choice of land happen inadvertently?

It appears that the land was a natural choice for the officials owing to the high fertility of the land that has been traditionally irrigated with mere rain for decades. The farmers feel that their claim of 'highly fertile' soil in their land has been vindicated after five years. The State government, in 2008, claimed it to be a 'dry land' and proposed to set up an industrial park on a sprawling 1,478 acres.

The move was opposed not only by the farmers and environmentalists, but also the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, which was in the Opposition then.

The proof of the soil fertility has come at a time when the State policy with regard to the industrial park here has not changed much officially.

For, the majority of the 300 acres of the land selected for millet promotion comes under land identified for industrial park, said Madurai District Farmers' Association secretary M. Ramalingam. "This has proved that the vast tracts of black cotton soil was very much a farming land and not 'dry' as claimed by the officials," he said.

Under the scheme, the State government has not stopped just with giving a subsidy in the form of seeds, ploughs, fertilizers and pesticides. The officials have also given machinery, costing Rs 5 lakh, to the cluster of farmers and farm hands for post-harvest process of millets.

And the whopping 42,000 pages of facts on the land, Mr. Ramalingam got through the Right to Information Act, reveal that this is not the only project the State government, district administration or the local body, has taken up on this land.

Amid a series of agitations, the Department of Social Forestry had planted 500 teak saplings under Tree Cultivation in Private Lands scheme in Karisalkalampatti. And this happened in 2011-12, three years after the government claimed that the village had only dry land, Mr. Ramalingam said. The farmer, K. Parameswaran, was given an incentive of Rs 2,250 for planting the saplings on 1.20 acres of rain-fed land.

The district administration also distributed 236 goats to 59 persons of Sivarakottai in 2014-15 under the Tamil Nadu Government Priceless

Goat/Sheep Distribution Scheme. “These animals, given to the landless farmers, depend on our land for fodder,” Mr. Ramalingam said.

Among the farmlands are several waterbodies in the three villages. The Water Resources Atlas of Madurai district, including Kalligudi block, released by the then Collector D. Raajendiran, talks about the ponds and ‘ooranis’ catering to the needs of cattle.

Proving the point, the district administration had, after 2008, spent a few lakhs on deepening some of those ‘ooranis’ and ponds and for strengthening their bunds under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Scheme.

The description of Sivarakottai village in 1920 lists paddy, ‘chulam,’ ‘cumbu,’ ‘ragi,’ ‘thinai,’ ‘saamai,’ ‘varagu,’ ‘kudiraivaali,’ horse gram, black gram, red gram among others as crops cultivated in Sivarakottai. “This holds good even today,” Mr. Ramalingam said.

The AIADMK had fought against the then Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam government’s proposal of acquiring the “farm land.” Its MLA, representing Tirumangalam Assembly Constituency, M. Muthuramalingam, raised the issue in the Assembly.

In his August 11, 2011, speech, he claimed that when several other lands were available for industrial purpose, the DMK government had attempted to acquire “cultivable” land. He also urged for the construction of a dam in Kalligudi block for the benefit of the farmers.

Agriculture Director M. Rajendran, who came to inaugurate a millet processing unit, said that he was unaware of the land proposed for SIPCOT park being proved cultivable through the State government project. However, Joint Director A. Jayasingh Gnanadurai clarified to him that those lands were cultivated under the millets project.

The MLA said that he was very much aware of the new development. “It only reflects the State government’s flexible stand on the issue. The government is open on the issue. The option before farmers are whether they need an industrial park, or want more money for their land or no park at all,” he said.

## Bountiful crop drives down price of jasmine in Salem



Traders expect bulk arrival of all varieties of flowers from Salem, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts. —PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

The price of jasmine has nosedived in the city flower markets, owing to the good crop and bulk arrival, according to sources here.

The farmers who had raised jasmine crop in areas like Panaimarathupatti, Ariyanur, Veerapandi and Veeranam in the district have registered good crop this season.

This has in turn led to heavy arrival of the popular flower in the VOC Flower Market in the city. As a result of this, the price of jasmine had come down to a considerable extent.

A kg of jasmine which was priced between Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,000 per kg last week, has come down to Rs. 400 - Rs. 500 on Saturday, according to sources at the flower market.

However, the price of the other flower varieties such as Kanagambaram (Rs. 280 per kg), sambangi (Rs. 40), samanthi (Rs. 80), white samanthi (Rs. 100) and rose (Rs. 80), have remained stable in the last one week, sellers here said further. The farmers and the flower traders in the market say that they hope that the price of the flowers will register an upward trend this week in the wake of Pongal festival, followed by many auspicious days.


“We expect bulk arrival of all varieties of flowers from Salem, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts, apart from Bangalore for the Pongal festival,” says a trader who has a shop at VOC Flower Market.

## Good rain, but groundwater table down

### THE WATER SCENARIO

TAMIL NADU RECEIVED 43 CM RAINFALL DURING OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2014

- Tamil Nadu's major reservoirs **have better storage now** than last year
- Water managers **feel confident of maintaining the supply** without any difficulty
- Northeast monsoon **deficient in eight districts**
- Groundwater table **down in dozen districts**, as per December readings, compared to the previous year



Despite the State receiving considerable amount of rainfall during the northeast monsoon (October-December), the groundwater position in several districts has declined, triggering doubts about the smooth supply of water in the coming summer.

According to the readings taken in December 2014, a dozen districts registered fall in the water table compared to what it was a year ago. Seven of them — Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Dharmapuri, Thanjavur and Perambalur — saw the table going down by about one metre. Less rainfall has been cited as the major reason for the fall in the table.

Though the readings for January are expected to be available in a week or so, there may not be much change in the situation as the rainfall in December occurred mostly in southern districts, where the groundwater position was generally better now than that of 2014, says an official.

For the entire State, the rainfall in the last three months was 43 cm, barely short of the anticipated 44 cm. Five out of 32 districts — Erode, The



Nilgiris, Ramanathapuram, Tirunelveli and Tuticorin — received rainfall in excess. While 13 districts fell under the category of “normal rainfall,” eight districts registered deficient rainfall. Among the eight districts were Kancheepuram, Vellore, Tiruchi and Madurai, which received rainfall, varying from 18 cm in Vellore to 26 cm in Tiruchi to 32 cm in Madurai to 44 cm in Kancheepuram. The surplus districts included Tirunelveli (85 cm rainfall); Ramanathapuram (61 cm) and The Nilgiris (59 cm). Chennai (72 cm rainfall) and Coimbatore (31 cm) form part of those districts which got normal rainfall during the season.

An official in-charge of urban water supply maintains that there will not be any difficulty in meeting the water requirements this summer as a substantial number of urban water supply schemes are dependent on the Cauvery river. Once the samba crop is harvested in a month, there will be enough water in the Mettur dam, whose water level was much higher on Tuesday compared to the situation a year ago, the official points out. The Vellore, Melur and Hogenakkal water supply schemes, all using the Cauvery as the source, are expected to address the water needs of people in the urban local bodies sufficiently this year. Coimbatore is not likely to meet any problem as its reservoirs have comfortable storage. In the case of Chennai, the Krishna water supply scheme and the Veernam scheme, supplemented by two desalination plants, will ensure adequate water, the official hopes.

### **‘Paddy procurement details to be made online soon’**

*Efforts on for immediate disbursement to farmers*



Communication Advisor Parakala Prabhakar and Minister P. Narayana inspecting the arrangements at Shilparamam ahead of the visit of the Chief Minister, in Tirupati on Sunday.— PHOTO: K.V. POORNACHANDRA KUMAR

The State government will upload the details of paddy procurement on the website of Civil Supplies Department soon, Communication Advisor Parakala Prabhakar said on here Sunday, adding that the move would bring in transparency in the process.

Elucidating details of the review meeting held at Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu's residence, here on Sunday, Mr. Prabhakar said that more than 19.1 lakh metric tonnes of paddy had been procured from farmers and millers this year when compared to the 14.82 lakh metric tonnes last year. "An excess of 5 lakh metric tonnes has been procured this year. The Godavari districts (East – 9.81 metric tonnes and West – 5.70 metric tonnes) have a major contribution to the total," he said.

Mr. Prabhakar said that steps were being taken, according to the orders of the Chief Minister, for an immediate disbursement of money into the accounts of farmers and the same would be updated online, including all the financial transactions. Asked about the apps being developed by the government, he said a women's safety app is under testing stage and would soon be released, along with another highlighting the plans and schemes.

### **Mushroom growers demand revision of subsidy**

: Mushroom growers of Odisha have demanded a revision of recently declared norms of subsidy for mushroom cultivators under the National Horticulture Mission as well as insurance cover for mushroom cultivation.

These demands were made during the meeting of Ganjam district unit of Odisha Mushroom Growers' Federation at Rangeilunda. According to the adviser of the federation, B. Narasingha Rao, under a joint scheme of Central and State governments taken up under the National Horticulture Mission, a subsidy of 70 per cent had been declared for mushroom cultivation through 'bamboo structure shade net house'. Under this project, around 200 mushroom growers of Ganjam district had benefited in 2013-14.

But this year, a new notification has come up that reduces the subsidy amount to 50 per cent. This means, in each district of Odisha, at most 504 square metres of 'bamboo structure shade net house' mushroom cultivation with subsidy would be promoted. A single mushroom grower would be eligible for subsidised 'bamboo structure shade net house' cultivation on maximum 200 square metres.

The mushroom growers alleged that because of this restriction, the enthusiasm for mushroom cultivation would wane in the State. It would lead to reduction in the number of mushroom cultivators in the State. A large number of small and marginal farmers who had become economically self-sufficient because of mushroom cultivation may be affected.

Mushroom growers have demanded the State agriculture minister and Chief Minister to allow subsidy to each mushroom cultivator for minimum 504 square metres. They have also asked for an agricultural loan up to five lakh rupees at low interest for mushroom growers and to provide insurance cover for mushroom cultivation. It may be noted that till now mushroom cultivation is not eligible for agricultural loan and crop insurance cover in Odisha. The federation demanded establishment of mushroom trading points in all urban centres of the State with the support of mushroom growers.

*A large number of small and marginal farmers who had become economically self-sufficient may be affected*

#### **‘Ensure market access for farmers’**

Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala has called for improving market access for farmers in order to promote farming. He was of the view that the facility, along with increased returns for agricultural products, was necessary for the welfare of the farming community.

Addressing a public meeting conducted as part of an exhibition-cum-sale of agricultural and industrial products, organised by the Chengannur block panchayat, Mr. Chennithala said the State was in need of reviving the age-old traditional practices of organic farming. He pointed out that the excessive usage of chemical fertilisers and pesticides had resulted in serious ailments among human beings.

“Studies have shown that most parts of the world were witnessing a decline in the production of agricultural products. The situation has been no different in Kerala, where agricultural lands were increasingly being used for other purposes such as establishing houses. The depressing trend threatened to destroy the nature, which provides for the livelihood of several sections. The optimum use of the natural resources was necessary for their sustenance,” he said.

## **Nod for rural road renovation projects**

*Rs.14 crore for NABARD-aided works at Irikkur*

The Rs.14-crore National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD)-aided rural road renovation projects in the Irikkur Assembly constituency have been sanctioned.

This was announced by Rural Development Minister K.C. Joseph in a press release here. The Minister, who represents the constituency, said that the NABARD had approved the projects for renovating 36 rural roads.

He said the proposed works were among those aimed at development of hill areas. Various projects, including minor irrigation works, bunds, and road renovation works and other development projects, had been carried out over the past three years through the Hill Area Development Agency as special packages for ending the backwardness of hill areas.

The Ottathai-Perumanda road, Panamkutti-Anathavalam road, Pookkad-Chanthamangalam road, Chengalayi-Koyyam road, Arangupalam-Kulathinalkavala road, Thadippara-Mukkutti road, Vanchiyam-Areekkamala road, Thumpeni-Madambam regulator-cum-bridge school road, Thathampalli-Udayapuram road, Ilavunkalpadi-Angadithattu road, and Manikkadavu-Cherimanmavu road were granted Rs.40 lakh each. The Manippara-Ottappara-Kunnathur road was granted Rs. 75 lakh and the roads that were sanctioned Rs.50 lakh each included Morani-Parlongara road, Shanthipuram-Jayagiri road, Kaithalam-Pullamala-Mandalam road, Vellad-Pathanpara-Noolittamala road. The Peringamala-Chullamukk road, Petrol pump-Kulinja road, Kuttav-Parakkadavu road, Hippikkavala-Mallakkalam road, Vallyalam-Perikkode road, Manippara-Vengalot road were given Rs.30 lakh each.

- ***36 rural roads to be renovated: K.C. Josep***
- ***Works among those aimed at hill area growth***

## **Nod for turmeric park raises farmers' hopes**

*They believe it will ensure a reasonable remunerative price*

Farmers in Nizamabad are overjoyed at the news of Spices Board of India giving its technical agreement for the establishment of a turmeric park in Nizamabad district. However, many farmers are of the opinion that the park needs to be set up in Armour sub-division as the turmeric is mainly grown in over 30,000 hectares in eight mandals of the area. That apart, the sub-division has all facilities – two National Highways, NH-44

(Hyderabad-New Delhi via Nagpur) and NH-63 (Mumbai-Jagadapur), and the yet-to-be completed Peddapally-Nizamabad railway line pass through Armoor.

Many farmers believe that if the park cum processing unit comes into existence, it would resolve their woes as it will ensure reasonable remunerative price besides avoiding the risk in transporting the produce to far-off markets such as Sangli in Maharashtra for a better price. Since online trading facility will also be available with the setting up of a turmeric park, trading of produce could be possible from all over the world.

Farmers of Armoor area grow the crop and process it in a traditional manner by using firewood and engaging coolies which involves high cost.

The proposed park is expected to bring modern technical methods to process the crop which saves time and unnecessary costs to farmers. Besides, farmers would also get expert advice for growing better quality crop.

In fact, the proposal has long been pending and the UPA-I government, on the request of the then State government led by Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, agreed in principle to sanction the park.

Subsequently, it sanctioned a processing unit and some amount. As a result, the work began and was carried out to some extent. However, the reasons were not exactly known as to why the processing unit work was left in the middle.

It was reported that Principal Secretary, Agriculture and Horticulture, Poonam Malakondaiah, on her recent visit to Kochi, succeeded in prevailing upon the Spices Board Chairperson to set up the park. However, the onus of providing facilities like land and power depends on the State government.

A turmeric farmer in Armoor area, Hanmanth Reddy, said that the turmeric park would be a boon for the farming community.

It will also provide direct and indirect employment to several youth in the area where there are absolutely no industries or manufacturing units.

***The proposed park is expected to bring in modern technical methods to process the crop, which will save time and unnecessary costs***

## **Germplasm conservation bank to be set up on Shivamogga**

*Objective is to conserve endangered medicinal plants*

The Department of Horticulture will establish a germplasm conservation bank of medicinal plants and trees in its newly established integrated bio centre on the outskirts of the city.

The bio centre had been established under the Rashtriya Krushi Vikasa Yojana at a cost of Rs. 8.2 crore. The centre has a plant tissue laboratory, a phytosanitary, a micro-biology laboratory and a bio-control laboratory, besides bio-input production unit.

### **Seed collection**

Deputy Director of the Department of Horticulture M. Vishwanath told *The Hindu* that it had been planned to collect seeds and saplings of about 500 species of medicinal plants, shrubs and trees at the germplasm bank. In the first phase, emphasis would be laid on the collection of seeds and saplings of herbal plants, endemic to Malnad region which had been included in the red list of critically endangered plants. It had been compiled by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), he said.

The Malnad forests were home for medicinal plants like *Vitis Quadrangularis*, locally known as Mungaravalli used in the treatment of fractures, and *Gymnema Sylvestre*, known as Madhunashini used in the treatment of diabetes. In addition, there are diverse varieties of *Mentha* (mint) and *Tulasi* in the region. The Ashoka tree (*Saraca asoca*), *Raktachandana* (*Pterocarpus santalinus*) found in these forests command high commercial value owing to their medicinal properties. Many of these plants are on the verge of extinction owing to deforestation and unscientific harvesting, he said.

### **Assistance**

The seeds and saplings of these plants would be collected from the forests around Agumbe and Kodachadri hills and conserved at the bio centre.

Assistance would be sought from the Department of Forest and the local gram panchayats. The services of students of the University of Agriculture and Horticultural Sciences, Shivamogga would also be availed for this endeavour, he said.

The seeds and saplings of medicinal plants and trees would be borrowed from the germplasm banks of the University of Agriculture Sciences, Bengaluru, the Indian Institute of Horticulture Research and Foundation for Revitalisation of Local Health Traditions, Bengaluru.

The department would cultivate these herbs at its bio centre nursery through tissue culture method. The seeds and saplings of these species would also be proliferated among farmers. Interested farmers could purchase them from the centre. The twin objectives of conservation of medicinal plants and augmenting the earnings of farmers would be fulfilled.

The government had accorded its nod for the proposal.

- *About 500 species of herbal plants and trees to be conserved*
- *Seeds and saplings to be collected from forests around Agumbe and Kodachadri hills*

### **Age no bar for this septuagenarian couple**



Sunkara Nageshwar Rao at his pomegranate orchard at Kaluvapalli village in Nalgonda district on Saturday.- Photo: Singam Venkataramana  
It seems age is no bar for this septuagenarian couple who turned horticulture farmers at the age of 70 and have started earning lakhs from their 30-acre pomegranate orchard besides providing regular employment to about 30 labourers.

The couple, Sunkara Nageshwar Rao (75) and his 72-year-old wife Vishalakshi, are farmers from Guntur district, who purchased some 30 acres of land near Kaluvapalli village of Gurrampode mandal in the district five years ago with the money sent by his two sons, who are software engineers. One of them is working in the U.S.A. and the other in Chennai.

Having studied up to Intermediate in the early years of India's Independence in Guntur, Mr. Rao garnered knowledge of cultivating

various agriculture crops. Since his sons wanted to take up some plantation in these lands, he had decided to cultivate pomegranate following the advice of horticulture officials. As the crop needs regular monitoring, the couple decided to stay in the orchard. They had started reaping the benefits of their hard work within two years as they have been making a profit of Rs. 2.5 lakh to Rs. 4 lakh on each acre, which equals an entry level software professional's salary, every six months. However, Mr. Rao said that he would invest at least Rs. 1 lakh on each acre for producing the best quality of pomegranate in the market by practising the best pest control management besides feeding better fertilizers.

One can produce a maximum extent of 10 tonnes of pomegranate on each acre. The price varies between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 80,000 per tonne depending on the market and quality of produce. "Earning money is not the sole aim; we want to remain active until our last breath. We are also happy we could provide employment to about 30 people," the couple said. The couple is also a source of inspiration for many farmers in Nalgonda; at least a dozen farmers had taken up cultivation of pomegranate after seeing their success.

### **Efforts to take organic farming to more areas**



District Collector C.A. Latha inaugurating an organic vegetable farming programme under the Niravu Farmers' Club at Vengeri in Kozhikode on Sunday.



### *Niravu joins hands with residents' forums*

The Niravu Farmers' Club, which recently secured the 'A-Grade Cluster' recognition for its vegetable cultivation initiatives from the Agriculture Department, has joined hands with various residents' associations, farmers' collectives, and educational institution, to promote organic vegetable farming.

The club will coordinate the cultivation of vegetables on 12.5 acres of land in collaboration with various farmers' groups this summer.

District Collector C.A. Latha inaugurated the programme on the premises of the Urban Agriculture Wholesale Market at Vengeri here on Sunday. The initiative would be given all support by making it part of the ongoing Haritholsavam Project of the district administration, she said.

The Haritholsavam project was intended to promote organic vegetable farming in the district, Ms. Latha said.

Vegetables will be grown in different localities under the supervision of Niravu. Member residents of Niravu will grow vegetables on their small landholdings. The 'Green World' farmers' collective at Vengeri will grow vegetables on six acres of land. The Youth Farmers Club at the Providence Women's College will use 40 cents of land.

The Prathyasha Residents' Forum, the Kulangara Residents' Association, and SnehadEEPam Residents' Forum are cooperating with the venture by cultivating vegetables on the premises of residences.

Niravu will take care of the marketing of the produce. The organisation will also ensure the availability of organic seeds and manures.

The vegetables produced will be marketed through the exclusive organic vegetable outlet of Niravu at Nadakkavu.

Training will be imparted to farmer groups. Niravu will bear the cost of transporting the produce to the outlet, project coordinator P. Babu said. "We hope the crops will be ready for the Vishu season," he said. For more details, contact: 94472 76177

### **Kole roga: quality test for copper sulphate**

Central Plantation Crops Research Institute (CPCRI) has come forward to conduct the quality test for copper sulphate sold in market to control kole roga (fruit rot disease) in arecanut palms.

Copper sulphate and lime mixture is traditionally used to control the disease and with this test farmers can clear their doubts about the copper sulphate in the market meeting the CPCRI standards.

According to the director of the institute P. Chowdappa, farmers doubt the quality of the copper sulphate available in the market before the monsoon.

Companies have sometimes failed to maintain the quality and therefore in some plantations the disease could not be controlled during the monsoon. He said that if the farmers brought the samples the institute would test them in its regional stations and research centres (Vitla, Kidu) and at its headquarters in Kasaragod. In addition, the institute itself would draw some samples from the market before the monsoon.

The director said that the institute has recommended the spray of copper sulphate-lime mixture for controlling the disease. It has not recommended the spray of any other products that were now available in the market under different brand names starting from “bio .....”. He added that it was to make farmers believe that they were organic products and chemical-free.

He said that no chemical without the label claim and registration with the Central Insecticides Board and Registration Committee could be sold in market. Those new products now sold in the market neither had the label claim nor the registration. He would write to the board bringing this aspect to the notice and issue an appropriate order to stop their sale.

Meanwhile, Yogesh H.R., Deputy Director, Department of Horticulture, Dakshina Kannada, told *The Hindu* that those products were being sold in the market as a “plant extract” and were organic. As of now no permission was required to sell organic products. There was no specific law to control sale of organic products. Hence the department was not able to seize them.

Mr. Yogesh said that it has still not been authentically established that those products had potassium phosphate chemical contents as claimed by some farmers.

H. Kempe Gowda, Joint Director, Department of Agriculture, Dakshina Kannada said that a sample of a product had been sent for testing to the Central Insecticide Laboratory, Faridabad, last year. Its report said that the sample did not have any harmful chemicals.

## Census `finds decline in water birds in capital



SHRINKING SPACE: Sanderlings and LS plovers and (right) Wood sandpiper

- *AWC 2015 records 1,874 birds of 49 species*

A heavy decline in water bird population of the capital has been revealed in the Asian Waterfowl Census (AWC) 2015.

As many as 1,874 individual birds belonging to 49 species were recorded in the census conducted on Saturday jointly by WWF-India and Social Forestry Wing of the Forests and Wildlife Department under the Green Partnership Programme in seven places in the capital district.

The highest count was from Punchakari paddy fields and from Vellayani Lake. Shore birds like Greater sand Plover, Lesser sand Plover, Sanderling, Heuglin's Gull and waders like Wood Sandpiper, Marsh Sandpiper, Green Sandpiper, Pacific golden Plover, Green Shank were the major migratory birds spotted during the day-long census.

The census was held at Punchakkari paddy fields, Vellayani Lake, Akkulam Lake, Veli Lake and beach, Poovar Estuary and Aruvikkara Dam Reservoir.

The lowest count was from Akkulam Lake where only 144 birds from 22 species could be spotted during the survey.

The heavy change in land use pattern and pollution are the major reasons for the heavy decline, according to the AWC coordinator, A. K. Sivakumar.

The lesser counts in Punchakkari and Vellayani Lake compared to previous years indicate loss of feeding grounds due to lack of agriculture.

The unprecedented heavy rainfall in the later months of 2014 which resulted in water-level rise in the habitats of waders is one of the reasons for the low count.

The census was carried out by a 72-member team comprising experts, Kerala Forests and Wildlife Department officials and volunteers. The teams were lead by Mr. Sivakumar, Hari Mavelikara, Neha Waikar, C.G. Arun, Jaichand Johnson, Anoop S.S. and Kiran R.C.

### Water your garden



Green fingers Vijayakumar Narayanan at his aquaponics farm in Palakkad  
*Vijayakumar Narayanan says aquaponics, a system of cultivation, is the future of agriculture*

The premise that one needs ground for a garden does not hold water anymore. Not if you are into aquaponics! And to help you take to it as a duck to water is Vijayakumar Narayanan.

“Aquaponics is the future of agriculture,” Vijayakumar Narayanan says.

In fact, he calls himself an ‘Aquaponics Futurist’, having successfully experimented with the aquaponics system of farming on his land.

Under his guidance, aquaponics farms have come up in Idukki, Ernakulam, Kozhikode, Telangana, and Coimbatore, one of them being the farm of actor Sreenivasan.

He trains people in this method of cultivation which integrates aquaculture (growing fish) and hydroponic (growing soil-less plants) systems.

His confidence stems from his farm – Nanniode Aquaponics Research and Development Centre on two cents of land at his home Nanniode in Palakkad district.

“You can have an aquaponics system on an area as small as 50 sq ft. It is a double treat, since you can use the fish and the produce from the

system. In larger systems, you can raise an income from both,” says 44-year-old Vijayakumar.

Vijayakumar learnt about aquaponics via Internet. He was a teacher with the Army Education Corps before he went to Muscat to work in a BPO and returned to Kerala with no concrete plans about his next step.

But things changed when the huge mango tree in his backyard got uprooted. He didn't know what to do with the huge pit left behind. “We made a swimming pool, but got bored after a week. I searched on the Internet to find what we could do with this water body and that's when I chanced upon aquaponics,” he says.

He takes pride in the fact that our aquaponic systems are more affordable when compared to those installed in foreign countries.

“Even those living in a one bed room flat can have pesticide free and organic food,” he says.

Visit his Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/aquaponicsfuturistor> contact 8129219282.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Herbs, greens, vegetables, fruit bearing and flowering plants can be grown in the system.

A small scale aquaponic unit meant for a family costs Rs. 50,000. If you can breed 200 kg fish, you can harvest 800 kg vegetables, per annum.

Though Tilapia is commonly bred in the system, these days varieties such as sea bass, prawns, cat fish, mullet and fresh water mussels can also be bred.

### **Deficient monsoon hits rabi sowing**

*Main concern is the lower acreage under pulses*

A delayed and deficient southwest monsoon has shrunk rabi sowing from last year's level.

If sowing was taken up on 597.15 lakh hectares of land last year, the figure this time was 566.18 lakh hectares. What is worrisome is the gap of 30.97 lakh hectares between the areas sown in the previous week and its corresponding week last year, higher than the deficit of 26.82 lakh hectares when making such a comparison for the week earlier.

The southwest monsoon was 12 per cent lower than the long period average in the country and 21 per cent in northwest India, hitting kharif crop production by 2-3 per cent. The rain deficit is affecting rabi sowing now.

A meeting in the Agriculture Ministry to review the crop and weather situation noted that wheat has been sown in 4.92 lakh hectares less this year because of lower moisture in the soil. Although the area under wheat

will be made up in the next few weeks, the harvest will depend on the weather conditions.

Of particular concern is the lower acreage of pulses. The area under gram is lower this year by 14.8 lakh hectares from last year's because of the lower minimum support price. Farmers have turned away from sowing gram as the price is low, sources said.

The area under coarse cereals is lower by 4.57 lakh hectares mainly because of reduced sowing of maize and jowar in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat.

### **Oilseeds**

Likewise, the area under oilseeds is lower by 6.96 lakh hectares with rapeseed and mustard recording the largest shortfall of 4.59 per cent. Lower acreage is reported from Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka and Gujarat where the monsoon was deficient.

Rabi sowing begins in October and harvest in March.

*Of particular concern is the lower acreage of pulses. The area under gram is*

*lower this year by 14.8 lakh hectares*

### **Biosafety Lab to strengthen livestock disease monitoring**

*It is also expected to increase efficiency of counter-disease measures*

The country's livestock disease monitoring and forecasting system has received a boost with the setting up of the state-of-the art Biosafety Laboratory in Bengaluru to take up detailed studies into disease-causing organisms.

The lab, set up by the National Institute of Veterinary Epidemiology and Disease Informatics (NIVEDI), was dedicated to the nation by Union Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh at Yelahanka on Saturday.

It will be the nerve centre for the livestock disease forecasting system, according to NIVEDI Director H. Rahman. Close on the heels of commissioning of the lab, the scope of the livestock disease forecasting disease has been increased from the earlier 10 diseases to 15, he said.

The lab is expected to not only improve the accuracy of the livestock disease forecasting system, but also increase the efficiency of counter-disease measures. Dr. Rahman told *The Hindu* that the lab would help develop new biotechnological tools to diagnose and forecast the disease as it had sophisticated facilities to take the process of investigation of disease to the molecular level.

The uniqueness of the lab was that it would provide a platform to bring together both veterinary experts and medical practitioners to work jointly on health issues, Dr. Rahman pointed out.

### **‘Natural farming need of the hour’**

Spreading the ‘Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF)’ practice across the country, agriculturist Subash Palekar on Saturday spent a few hours with girl students and progressive farmers at Goshala here, appealing to the students to ask their parents to practise natural farming.

Hailing from Vidharbha, a region that was hit by crisis in agriculture, Mr. Palekar narrated his life experiences during his journey dedicated to spread natural farming. “The ZBNF is the only solution available for our country to meet food production targets set to achieve by 2050 to feed the population, apart from saving irrigation water,” Mr. Palekar opined.

Mr. Palekar had suggested to the A.P. government to come out with ‘Natural Farming Policy’ to mitigate the scarcity of irrigation water and power. Responding to the experiences of several youths who were excelling in natural farming, the green activist also stressed that the ZBNF practice is an option that could curb migration of youths from villages.

### **Tea Board for more exports**

The Tea Board has asked the industry to boost exports which were suffering due to price arbitrage in the domestic market, an industry official said. Tea exports, which fell by about 12 million kg in April-September 2014, could also witness a similar down trend in October-December 2014 as well, the official said.

“During 2014, exports have declined as prices in the overseas markets have softened while that in the domestic auctions have firmed up,” a source in the Indian Tea Association (ITA), the apex body of tea growers, told PTI. The crop in Assam had suffered due to the drought conditions prevailing there leading to lower production of orthodox teas, the major export revenue earner.

The markets of Iran, the US, Pakistan and Bangladesh had made lower off-take of Indian tea, leading to an aggregate decline of 12 million kg during the period from April to September 2014. - PTI

## Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Sunny

Rain: 0

Humidity: 88

Wind: normal

### Tomorrow's Forecast

#### Monday, Jan 12

Max Min

29° | 21°

Sunrise: 06:34

Sunset: 05:58

Barometer: 1015

#### Tuesday, Jan 13

Max Min

29° | 21°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday  
Jan 14



29° | 21°

Sunny

Thursday  
Jan 15



29° | 20°

Sunny

Friday  
Jan 16



28° | 21°

Sunny

Saturday  
Jan 17



29° | 20°

Partly Cloudy

Sunday  
Jan 18



29° | 19°

Partly Cloudy



**Recipe: Tandoori broccoli & gobhi**

*Grilled cauliflower and broccoli florets marinated in yoghurt and spices.*

**Preparation time:** 20 minutes+ marinating time

**Cooking time:** 10 minutes

**Serves:** 4

**Ingredients**

1 cup parboiled gobhi florets

1 cup parboiled brbroccoli florets

The marinade:

1/2 cup hung curd

1tsp besan

1 tsp chili powder

1 tsp roasted jeera powder

2tsp ginger garlic paste

1/2 tsp kasoori methi

2 tsp chat masala

2 tsp chopped coriander

1tbsp refined oil

salt to taste

**For serving:**

Onion rings

Mint leaves

**Method:**

-Marinate the cauliflower and broccoli florets in the prepared marinade for about 1 hour.

-Thread them on to skewers. Grill the marinated cauliflower and broccoli

florets over a charcoal or electric barbeque or grill in a preheated oven at 250 degree Celsius till the cauliflower is tender.

-Serve hot on a bed of onion rings and mint leaves.

### [Recipe: Stuffed potatoes](#)

*Grilled battis served with cheesy mashed potatoes and sweet tomtato chutney.*

#### **Recipe Ingredients:**

**For the battis** - Wholewheat flour, 200g Salt, ½tsp Oil 2tsp

**For the stuffings** - 1 chicken mince, 200g chopped ginger, 1tsp chopped garlic, 1tsp salt to taste, crushed black pepper, ½ tsp oil 1tsp mixed herbs, ½ tsp 2.green peas, 1 cup chopped ginger, 1tsp chopped garlic, 1tsp chopped green chillies, 1tsp chopped onions, 2tbsp salt to taste, crushed black pepper, ½ tsp oil 2tsp

**For the mashed potatoes** - Potatoes- 250g, Butter- 50g, Cheese- 50g, Salt to taste, Crushed black pepper - ½ tsp, Chopped parsley 1tsp

**For the red chutney:** Tomatoes - 200g, Sugar- 100g, Mix of nigella, aniseed, cumin ½tsp, Red chilli powder tsp, Salt to taste, Vinegar-1tbsp

**Recipe Method:** Mix the oil & salt in the flour and knead into a smooth dough with lukewarm water. Let stand for sometime. For stuffing 1, heat oil add the ginger and garlic and saute for a minute. Add the chicken mince and cook for 3—4 minutes. Add the pepper, mixed herbs and adjust the seasoning. For stuffing 2, heat oil add the chopped onions and saute for 2—3 minutes.

Add the chopped ginger, garlic and saute for a minute .Add the peas, salt and pepper and 2tsp water. Cover and cook till the peas are tender. When cooked, mash the peas and cool. For the mashed potatoes, peel the potatoes and cut into chunks. Put the potatoes to boil with a little water . when done, drain the potatoes and mash well. Heat the butter and add the potatoes. Cook for a while to get the potatoes creamy. Add the cheese, salt and black pepper and cook for another minute. Add the chopped parsley.

For the red chutney — chop the tomatoes coarsely. Heat the oil, add the spices, add tomatoes, sugar, red chilli powder and allow to cook till the tomatoes are lightly tender but do not leave the skin. Add vinegar, salt and pepper and cook over slow flame till it acquires a glazed look. For the baatis — knead the dough for another minute and divide into six balls. Stuff three balls with stuffing 1 and the remaining with stuffing 2. Cook over glowing coals till the outer crust is lightly browned and the baatis are firm to touch. To serve — assemble the baatis on a plate with the mashed potatoes on one side topped with a dollop of red chutney.

### [Recipe: Russian Borscht](#)

*Be it veg or non-veg, Russian cuisine has great nutritional value and taste. Here are some tips to create Borscht soup, which is served with sour cream and bread...*

#### **Ingredients:**

Three cups of chicken stock (for non vegetarians) or plain water (for vegetarians)

- 1 cabbage - 4 potatoes - 2 beetroots - 2 carrots - Tomato paste - 1 small onion - 5 garlic bubblets - Parsley or dill - A cup of sour cream - Cut chicken or pork meat

**How to make it?** This soup requires extensive cooking. Boil water/chicken stock for almost an hour along with peeled raw beetroot.

After boiling take out beetroot and cut it into thick strips. Put it back in the pan and boil the same for half an hour. While it's being boiled, add diced potato.

In the meanwhile cut the carrot and fry it to later add into borsch. Do the same with sliced onion. Later, add tomato paste and stir it for some time.

Garlic to be added in the fried onion-tomato mixture. Add nicely chopped cabbage into the borsch pan. Make sure potato is boiled properly. And if you are adding chicken or pork make sure it's soft and tender

Now, add fried onion and carrot to it and mix everything.

Leave the pan uncovered

It's cooked and is ready to be served. While serving borsch it's vital to have sour cream kept in a separate bowl

### **Recipe: Paneer Cutlet**

#### **Ingredients:**

Malai paneer (250 gram), two finely chopped spring onions, one tbsp each of minced green chilli and chilli powder, salt to taste, one tsp finely chopped coriander leaves, breadcrumbs, two tsp finely chopped mint leaves, oil.

#### **Method:**

Crumble the malai paneer and mix with chillies, coriander, mint, onions, chilli powder and salt. Shape it into round balls and dip in breadcrumbs. Dry for 10 minutes. In hot oil, deep fry the cutlets until it is golden brown on both sides. Serve with toast or in round bread rolls.

### **Make fresh mussel soup this winter**

*Winter is a great time to eat mussels. While mussels can be harvested all year, most of them are gotten in the winter when the taste and quality of the meat is best.*

Cold season is known to produce some great shellfish. So, if you don't want to spend a lot of time cooking mussels, making a tasty soup out of one is ideal too. Here's how you can go about making some tasty grub without too much effort.

#### **Ingredients**

Take around 2 kilo of mussels and clean them

2 onions peeled and diced.

2 garlic cloves, minced

2 limes freshly squeezed

2 green onions

1/2 tea spoon cayenne pepper

3 tablespoon butter

Parsley leaves, Salt and pepper to taste

## **Method**

Put the cleaned mussels, wine and the onions in a pan and cook for five minutes with the lid on. You can put the heat low soon as the mussels open up a bit.

Put the mussels, wine and shallots in a saucepan and turn the heat to high. Cover and cook, shaking occasionally, just until the mussels open, about 5 minutes. Strain the mussels from the cooked, watery broth and set aside.

In a separate pan, heat the butter and add chopped green onions until five minutes. Put in the minced garlic, cayenne pepper, mussel broth and two cups of water. Heat until it boils, the turn off the heat and add lemon juice, salt and pepper.

## **Serving**

Arrange the mussels in soup bowls and pour the soup over them. Garnish with parsley and serve.

## **Recipe: Lachcha Paratha**

### **Ingredients**

Whole wheat flour/atta 2 cups  
Salt 1/2 tsp  
Oil 2 tbsp + to toast paratha

### **For layering**

Oil 4 tbsp  
Whole Wheat Flour/Atta 2 tbsp

### **Method**

- In a wide bowl, add flour and salt mix well. Then to the flour add oil and combine the flour with oil well.
- After that using water knead it to a soft, smooth dough. The dough should be little loose and moisture but not sticky.
- Then shape it to a round ball and keep it covered in a oiled bowl.

- Let it rest for 1-2 hours. I let it for 2 hours.
- After resting time, divide the dough into 6 big lemon sized balls.
- And mix flour and oil for layering and keep ready.
- Now take one ball and using a rolling pin roll it to a wide thin disc, roll it wide and thin as possible.
- To this add 2 tsp oil-flour mixture and spread it all over the disc.
- Then pleat the dough to make folds as shown in the picture. And stretch a little bit and roll into spiral.
- Then keep that spiral aside covered. And follow the same procedure for rest dough balls. Keep it covered for 5 minutes.
- And then roll each spirals to a round flat disc.

After that heat the tawa, smear with few drops of oil then place on rolled flat disc and cook for a minute or until a bubble appears.

Then flip other side and drizzle oil around and press gently using spatula and cook until you see some brown spot on bottom side. Again turn other and cook for few seconds.

Remove from the tawa and make all other prepared disc the same way.

## 5 best bedtime beverages

*With the winters finally here, it's that time of the year, when you can cuddle with your favourite book at night, or have a great conversation with your loved ones — all you need is a hot cup of some delicious beverage for company!*

Instead of the classic cappuccino, give yourself the choice of a soothing herbal tea or some hot chocolate on a chilly wintry night.

**Cocoa:** Most people consider this the classic pre-bed drink. First consumed by the Mayans, cocoa was prepared as a delicious hot beverage made up of roasted cocoa beans, boiling water and a pinch of spice. Till today, it remains the most popular choice of hot drink before bed around the world.

**Chamomile tea:** If you don't want to consume dairy before sleeping, the soothing Chamomile tea is an excellent choice. It helps you calm down, by relaxing the nerves and calming the stomach, promoting a great, peaceful night's sleep. For best results, drink a cup of unsweetened Chamomile tea around 30 minutes before bedtime.

**Warm milk:** If you've been told since childhood to drink a glass of warm milk before bedtime, there's a good scientific reason behind it. The amino acid tryptophan in milk helps the body produce the hormones it needs for a serene night's sleep. What's more, milk is also rich in calcium and is a great source of protein. No wonder it remains one of the simplest yet best hot beverages before bedtime.

**Peppermint tea:** Just like Chamomile tea, Peppermint tea is another kind of herbal tea that naturally helps distress the body. If you have an exam or job interview the next day, it's recommended to have a cup of this delicious and refreshing herbal tea — it will soothe your stomach, reduce nausea and relieve anxiety!

**Hot chocolate:** Often confused with cocoa, hot chocolate, traditionally, is a beverage that is thicker, creamier in consistency, as it contains cocoa butter as well as cocoa powder. A richer alternative to cocoa, hot chocolate is usually prepared with milk (unlike cocoa, which is made with hot water) and is a great option for kids.

## **8 health benefits of ginger tea**

*Nothing beats cold in the winter like a piping hot cup of ginger tea. With its high levels of Vitamin C, magnesium and other minerals, ginger root is extremely beneficial for health.*

Once made into tea, you can add peppermint, honey or lemon to mask the taste of the ginger. Here's why you should have this soothing beverage.

### **Relieve nausea**

Drinking a cup of ginger tea before travelling can help prevent the nausea and vomiting associated with motion sickness. You can also drink a cuppa at the first sign of nausea to relieve the symptom.

### **Improve stomach performance**

Useful in improving digestion and increasing absorption of food, ginger tea can bloating after eating too much.

### **Reduce inflammation**

Ginger contains anti-inflammatory properties that make it an ideal home remedy for muscle and joint problems. In addition to drinking ginger tea, you can also use it to soak inflamed joints.

### **Fight respiratory problems**

Ginger tea can help relieve congestion associated with the common cold. Try a cup of ginger tea for the respiratory symptoms associated with environmental allergies.

### **Improve blood circulation**

The vitamins, minerals and amino acids in ginger tea can help restore and improve blood circulation that may help decrease the chance of cardiovascular problems. Ginger may prevent fat from depositing in the arteries helping to prevent heart attacks and stroke.

### **Relieve menstrual discomfort**

This one is for all women suffering from menstrual cramps. Try soaking a towel in warm ginger tea and apply it to your lower abdomen. It may help relieve the pain and relax the muscles. At the same time, drink a cup of ginger tea with honey.

### **Strengthen immunity**

Ginger tea can help strengthen your immunity due to the high levels of antioxidants in ginger.

### **Relieve stress**

Ginger tea has calming properties that may help lower your stress and tension. This is thought to be due to a combination of the strong aroma and healing properties.

### **Why Aloe vera juice is good for the body**

*Many of us have just used aloe vera facial creams or lotions. But it is aloe vera juice that is actually the most beneficial for the body. Here's listing various ways in which the plant helps your system.*



**Helps digestion:** Aloe vera is beneficial for curing bowel problems due its anti-inflammatory properties. It also grows good bacteria in the gut and thereby helps in digestion issues.

**Healthy weight loss:** If you wish to lose weight naturally, Aloe Vera juice is the best for you. It reduces weight by stabilizing the metabolic rate and helps burn fat in the body.

**Fights diabetes:** Aloe vera helps in regulating the blood sugar level and if the juice is consumed regularly, it can help diabetes to a great extent. But it is best to consult a doctor before consuming the juice as you need to take what is prescribed by the doctor.

**Detox:** Mixing two teaspoons of aloe vera juice with a glass of water helps in flushing out toxins from the body. It treats ulcers and cleanses the digestive system.

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

## **‘Development is key to eradicating poverty’**

UN Secretary-General calls on India’s business community to lead the transformation

### **Gandhinagar, January 11:**

At the Vibrant Gujarat summit, world leaders were united in their call for inclusive and sustainable development for ushering in a better tomorrow. While Prime Minister Narendra Modi spelt the vision of inclusiveness — of small with big, and poor with rich — the international leaders discussed global poverty and other economic issues.

Terming 2015 as an important year for the United Nations, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said three key priorities are hoped to be achieved this year:

First is the Millennium Development Goals. “We have to accelerate all our resources and efforts to meet the target,” he said.

Second, world leaders must shape and agree to a post-2015 development agenda with focus on sustainable development.

And, third, they must agree to “a universal and meaningful climate change agreement in December in Paris.”

“Gujarat is a prime example of how sustainability and private action are different aspects of the same issue. I call on all of India’s business

community to lead the transformation. We need sustainability and inclusive growth,” the Secretary-General said.

Impressed with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s rise from a humble background to holding the highest office in the country, John Kerry, US Secretary of State said Modi’s campaign of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas* (participation of all, development for all) can be a win-win situation for all.

Kerry spoke of Indo-US ties getting stronger gradually. “Our economic relationship grows stronger in every respect. We share PM Modi’s goal of increasing our countries’ annual trade five-fold in the years ahead ...We can take this relationship to the new heights that we envision,” he said.

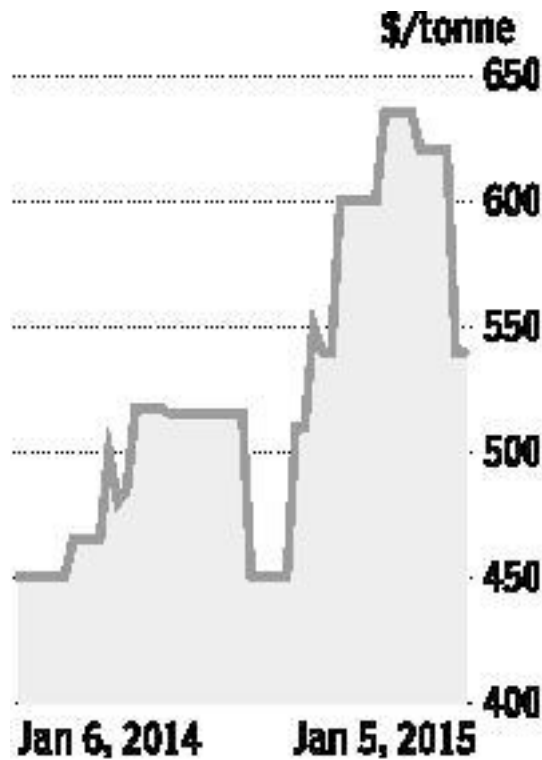
Echoing the sentiments expressed by Ban Ki-moon on climate change concerns, Kerry mentioned that it was affecting crop production and raising the cost of doing business. “Together we can create an environment where all companies play a leading role in bringing cutting-edge technology, equipment and capital know-how not just to India, but countless countries that need this growth and development,” he said.

### **Economic pilgrimage**

Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay termed the summit an economic pilgrimage. “I will be going for a religious pilgrimage later this week to Varanasi and Bodha Gaya. But first I have come to the economic pilgrimage here,” he said.

### **Ammonia nourished by agriculture**





Ammonia is the key ingredient for manufacturing fertilisers

Crude oil has been on a free fall. The widely tracked West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude has lost almost 47 per cent in the last one year, and rules close to its May 2009 low of \$47 a barrel.

Following suit, the price of natural gas futures contract (NG1), which is the most widely traded gas contract on the New York Mercantile Exchange, has also fallen 33 per cent to about \$2.8 per million British thermal units (mmbtu) now. But despite the sharp fall in gas prices in the past year, the prices of chemicals which use gas as raw material have not declined much.

Ammonia is a classic example. The price of ammonia, a key chemical used in fertilisers, defied the downtrend in crude oil and natural gas. The Green Market Middle East Ammonia Index has risen 20 per cent over the year to January 2015.

Ammonia is a chemical manufactured using hydrocarbon sources such as natural gas, naphtha, fuel oil and coal. While ammonia has a variety of applications, it is the key nitrogen source used in fertilisers for agriculture. In many developed countries such as the US and Australia, ammonia is directly applied to improve the nitrogen content in the soil.

In addition to soil application, ammonia is used as a refrigerant gas, as fuel in rocket engines and alkaline cleanser in floor and window cleaners. Ammonia forms the key ingredient for manufacturing a host of chemicals such as nitric acid, cyanide and other explosives such as trinitrotoluene, nitroglycerin and nitrocellulose. Though it has multiple end uses, much of

the ammonia produced globally is used in agriculture — both for direct application on the field and as raw material for making fertilisers.

As a large producer of fertilisers, India accounts for almost a tenth of the global ammonia production.

The country has ammonia capacity of over 14 million tonnes and imports another two million tonnes. In India too, bulk of the ammonia produced goes into making fertilisers. Though domestic ammonia prices broadly track the international prices, currency and domestic demand too have a role to play.

### **Linked to agri commodities**

Given that agriculture accounts for the bulk of ammonia's end use, its demand and prices have shown significant linkages to agricultural output and price realisations on crops.

This is probably the reason for the widening disconnect between the prices of ammonia and its key input — gas.

Ammonia prices, which were closely tracking gas prices until early 2010, seem to have diverged from the trend observed in the price of their key raw material. For instance, in 2011, the price of gas fell by 32 per cent, from \$4.4/mmbtu to about \$3/mmbtu. But ammonia prices shot up by 41 per cent during this period, from \$410 a tonne to \$580 a tonne.

Historical data also supports the view that ammonia prices respond more to prices of agricultural commodities (which translate into better income for farmers and drive ammonia demand) rather than the price of its input (natural gas).

Consider the following trends. Between November 2008 and December 2011, gas prices almost halved, from nearly \$7/mmbtu to \$3.1 /mmbtu. But, the price of ammonia jumped threefold to \$580 a tonne. Prices of agri commodities such as corn and wheat were on a firm wicket during this period. The price of C1 corn, the corn futures contract on the Chicago Board of Trade (CBOT), gained 71 per cent. The wheat W1 contract, the actively traded wheat future contract on CBOT, rose 13 per cent during the same period.

Likewise, even as gas price fell by almost 30 per cent between August 2014 and January 2015, following the weakness in crude oil globally (47 per cent decline), ammonia prices firmed up by 6 per cent. Corn and wheat futures have gained 13 and 4 per cent during this period.

Over the medium term, though, all the key drivers for ammonia seem to be headed down, suggesting a benign outlook for the volatile commodity. Both natural gas and oil prices are burdened by a global supply overhang. Agri-commodities, as a class, have been moderating globally on a supply glut.

Over 2014, the IMF Agricultural Raw Materials Index, a bellwether on agri-commodities, declined nearly 7 per cent. Unless these variables post

a dramatic turnaround, ammonia may find it difficult to sustain its relentless gains.

### ***REALLY?***

***High concentration of ammonia in the air can result in burning of the nose, throat and respiratory tract***

### **Farmers urged not to use chemical fertiliser**

#### **Coimbatore, January 11:**

While Tamil Nadu is a front-runner in agriculture production and productivity, it has also topped in the usage of chemical fertiliser. This is a matter of concern, said M Rajendran, Director of Agriculture, Government of Tamil Nadu.

Delivering the key-note address at the valedictory session of the 7<sup>th</sup> Southern Regional Agricultural Fair and Farmers' Day 2015 at the Tamil Nadu University here, Rajendran urged the farmers to resist the use of chemical fertiliser. He pointed out that while States such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh used 50 kg of chemical fertiliser per hectare and Haryana used as much as 150 kg/hect, Tamil Nadu topped with 220 kg/ha. "The health of soil has deteriorated due to overuse. We are now propagating green manure to bring down the use of chemical fertilisers," he said and urged farmers to make productive use of the huge agriculture waste. State Minister for Agriculture SS Krishnamoorthy hailed the university's efforts in releasing 3 paddy varieties (Rice TKM 13, CR 1009 Sub 1 and MDU 6), one each of sorghum (K 12), wheat (CO W 3), cluster bean (MDU 1) and coconut hybrid (VPM 5) and two farm implements such as tractor drawn turmeric rhizome planter and hydraulic brake for two wheel tractor trailer system.

# **Business Standard**

### **Insecticides India eyes 20% turnover from exports in 3 yrs**

**Company to start export wing; Domestic agro chemical market pegged at Rs 15,000 cr**

**Agro chemicals** manufacturer Insecticides (India) Ltd expects 20 per cent of its turnover to come from exports in the next two to three years.

"We are starting an export wing. Exports may contribute 20 per cent to

our total sales in the next two to three years”, said Rajesh Aggarwal, managing director, Insecticides (India) Ltd.

Insecticides and agro chemicals worth Rs 15,000 crore are exported from the country every years.

The size of the domestic insecticide market is estimated at Rs 15,000 crore. Insecticides (India) with an annual turnover of Rs 900 crore has six per cent market share. By the end of 2014-15, the company is eyeing a turnover of Rs 1200 crore of which Odisha would contribute Rs 17 crore. The company has a share of eight per cent in Odisha’s insecticide market.

“We are working to expand our footprint in Odisha where our Navratna products are receiving good response, especially Lethal Super 505, Thimet, Indan Shark, Monocil and Nuvan which are very popular in the state. Going forward, we are aiming to generate a sizeable business from the Odisha market. Our newly launched products- Pulsor and Hakama will provide a fillip to our objective here”, Aggarwal said.

Insecticides (India) would soon launch its first bio-product Mycoraja in Odisha.

“We are doing various awareness activities for the farmers in Odisha as well and closely work with them. We work in the direction of providing the value to the farmers and bring to them the best quality products within their reach”, said M K Singhal, general manager, Insecticides (India) Ltd.

Insecticides (India) Ltd has six manufacturing facilities- three in Rajasthan, two in Jammu & Kashmir and one in Gujarat. It has two R&D (research & development) centres in Rajasthan. It has a network of 4800 distributors and 60,000 dealers across the country.

## **Punjab govt gives relief window to farmers**

In a relief to farmers, the Punjab government has decided to introduce a one-time settlement (OTS) scheme to provide them an opportunity to clear their overdues.

OTS is aimed at providing relief to those [farmers](#) who have been declared defaulters by Primary Cooperative Agricultural Development Banks (PADBs) by providing them an opportunity to clear dues and facilitate the banks in recycling of funds realised from non-performing assets, an official spokesperson said here on Sunday.

This scheme would also help banks in reducing overhead expenses of recovery of overdue amount.

This pro-farmer scheme will be applicable to all loans advanced by PADBs in the state that have become overdue as on or before June 30, 2014.

The spokesperson further said the scheme would cover cases where cases have been filed and also in cases where decrees have been obtained.

After the settlement is reached, PADBs may take appropriate steps for closure of such cases in respective courts.

However, the scheme would not cover cases of fraud and wilful defaulters.

In case a borrower does not honour the settlement, it would be treated as null and void and in such cases banks would be at liberty to recover the amount as if no settlement has been made.

This settlement amount would be calculated by charging simple interest at 9 per cent per annum on the default principal amount due, provided the total interest charged should not exceed the principal loan amount. However, there would be no concession regarding payment of principal amount. Likewise, no additional recovery would be made from such borrowers who have already paid double the principal amount or more than double the principal amount.

According to the scheme, 25 per cent of the settlement amount should be paid on the date of settlement and the balance of 75 per cent would be payable within a maximum period of one year in two instalments from the date of settlement.

In case the balance amount is paid within 30 days of settlement, then no interest for a period of up to 30 days would be charged on the amount paid within 30 days from the date of settlement.

However, in case the balance 75 per cent amount is not paid within the stipulated period, the settlement would stand cancelled and all legal proceedings initiated for recovery of loan would stand restored.

The borrower settling the dues under the scheme would be eligible for fresh loan only after the settled amount was fully paid, he added.

#### ONE-TIME SETTLEMENT

It is aimed at providing relief to farmers who have been declared defaulters by Primary Cooperative Agricultural Development Banks. It will provide them a chance to clear dues and facilitate the banks in recycling of funds.

[Rubber planters welcome govt move to reduce export window to 6 months](#)

**Imports of natural rubber has increased from 77,800 tonnes in 2008-09 to 360,000 tonnes in 2013-14**

The [Commerce Ministry](#) move to reduce the time window of exports to six months, in the case of the [Rubber](#) Advance License Import Scheme, will go a long way in stabilising sagging domestic rubber prices.

Union Commerce Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, earlier this week, announced the move to reduce the [export](#) window from the current 18 months to six months in the interest of the domestic rubber growers.



Various grower federations and United Planters' Association of Southern India (UPASI) had been seeking structural changes in the import policy for a long time and have appreciated the Commerce Ministry's latest decision.

“Currently, the window of exports is 18 months, extendable by six months of two durations. This is illogical when it is an established fact that the quality of natural rubber deteriorates after six months. A long time window makes the monitoring mechanism cumbersome and is not in line with the spirit of import for re-export cause. All this had added to a higher than required import and retention in the domestic market,” N Dharmaraj, Vice-President, UPASI, said in a statement.

A total quantity of 400,000 tonnes of rubber was imported duty free between 2011 and 2013. This forms almost 52 per cent of the imported quantity of rubber during these years. Moreover, a close look at the import data also indicates that the imports of natural rubber has increased from 77,800 tonnes in 2008-09 to 360,000 tonnes in 2013-14, an increase of 208 per cent.

Such high imports, in volumes much above the gap between production and consumption had depressed domestic prices, Dharmarajan said.

With the same objective in mind, [UPASI](#) has also asked the government to review the outdated norms of Standard Input Output Norm (SION) and issues of inverted duty structure in rubber goods industry to enable the robust growth of the rubber goods manufacturing sector in the country, he added.

## Odisha to seek more Central funds for food processing units

The [Odisha](#) government would soon approach the Centre for allocation of more funds under the National Mission on Food Processing (NMFP) with the rising demand for assistance from the entrepreneurs. "The Chief minister will soon write to the prime minister for allocation of funds under NMFP as the allocations to the state have already been exhausted", Panchanan Dash , secretary, MSME department, told media persons.

The state government has spent about Rs 10 crore allocated to it under the mission mode programme.

It may be noted that the chief secretary has already written to the Union ministry of food processing for allocation Rs 20 crore, but the Centre is yet to allocate the money. "Odisha is the only state which has spent the allocations", Dash added.

About 60 industrial units are taken up under the NMFP. The units promoted under the programme include processing units for poultry, tamarind, rice, cashew among others.

Under the programme, subsidies have been disbursed to 25 industrial units while 35 more food units are in the pipeline.

The state government has identified processing of perishable goods as the focus area.

Speaking at a 'Workshop cum Investors' Meet on Food Processing' on the occasion of Odisha MSME Trade Fair-2015, Dash said, about one per cent of the agriculture produce is processed in the state compared to national average of around six per cent. "We are aiming to process about

25 per cent of the produce by 2025 at par with the target fixed by the Centre", he added.

The state hopes that a proposal put forth by Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (Idco) to set up a sea food park at Deras in Khurda district is likely to be approved by the Centre under the Mega Food Park Scheme. The sea food park has been planned on an area of 100 acres at an estimated cost of Rs 116.43 crore, inclusive of the land cost. The park, if approved, will fulfil the long standing demands of exporters and other stakeholders.

As many as 52 [food processing units](#) participated in the Odisha MSME Trade Fair-2015