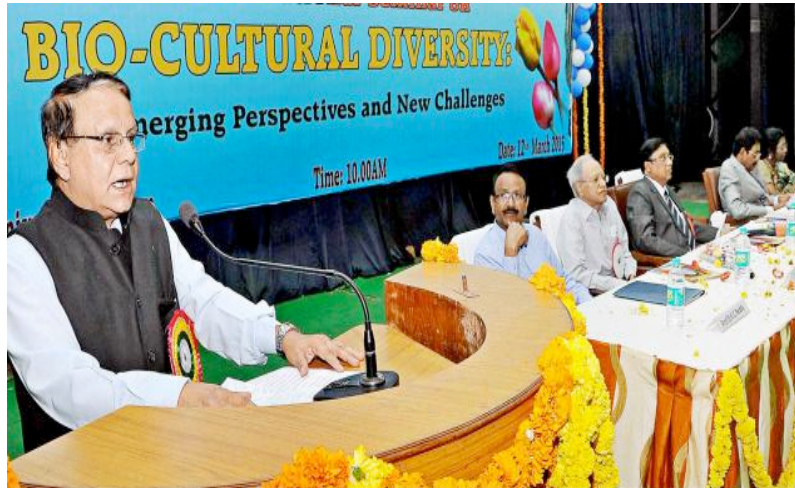


13.03.2015

THE HINDU

‘Corporate houses a threat to bio-diversity’



The entry of big corporate houses into the domain of the smaller communities looms as a large threat to bio-cultural diversity, said E. Haribabu, Vice-Chancellor of University of Hyderabad.

Speaking at the inauguration of the national seminar on ‘Bio-cultural diversity: Emerging perspectives and new challenges’ conducted by SVU Department of Anthropology here on Thursday, he said the industrialisation of agriculture, corporatisation of healthcare and privatisation of medical research, animal husbandry, horticulture and allied fields could pose a crisis to the very existence of biodiversity.

The concept of claiming Intellectual Property Rights over natural resources will be detrimental to the survival rights of an individual. “When India grows 300 varieties of brinjal, how is it justified to alter a gene in it and claim it as one’s property?” he wondered. SVU Vice-Chancellor W. Rajendra announced that a ‘Centre for Bio-cultural Diversity’ would be established.

Irrigation gets over Rs. 5,000 cr.



In line with giving thrust to the capital expenditure in major sectors, Andhra Pradesh government has made a provision for Rs.5,258 crore to the irrigation sector for 2015-16 with major part going for plan allocation. In view of the shift in contributions of agriculture, industries and service sectors to the GSDP from the combined state to that of successor state of Andhra Pradesh and the agriculture sector share increasing from 22.9 per cent to 27.5 per cent, the government is keen to complete the six ongoing irrigation projects on priority basis.

These projects including Pattiseema lift irrigation scheme, thortapalli barrage project, Handri Neeva, Galeru Nagari, Vamsadhara project, Veligona project to provide irrigation facilities in the drought prone Rayalaseema and Prakasam districts and backward districts of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram. The projects are expected to be completed during 2015-16 to 2017-18.

With five major rivers – Godavari, Krishna, Pennar, Vamsadhara and Nagavali with an ayacut of 101 lakh acres under major, medium and minor irrigation schemes, government accorded top priority for utilising 3,000 tmc of Godavari waters going to the sea.

With the same objective, government allocated Rs.1,000 crore for Polavaram project declared the national project by the Centre. As the project would be funded by the Centre, the allocated amount would be reimbursed by the Centre. Tipped as the first project in the country for interlinking rivers, it would divert 80 tmc of Godavari water to Krishna river, irrigate seven lakh acres and generate 960 mw of hydel power. As

the project would take about three years, Pattiseema Lift irrigation would be completed first to divert Godavari flood water to Krishna basin.

The Finance Minister said projects nearing completion would be completed first to bring more ayacut under cultivation.

Castor harvest in full swing in Pachamalai



Harvest of castor bean is in full swing in Pachamalai hills in the district, with farm labourers working overtime to pluck the ripe seeds. The oil seed is generally grown as an intercrop on the boundaries of tapioca farms. The tribal farmers use the local seeds for raising the crop.

According to Agriculture Department sources, the Uppilliyapuram block, which encompasses Pachamalai hills, is well suited for oil seed cultivation because of the abundance of red loamy soil.

Shrinking area

At present, only about 40 hectares of land is under castor seed cultivation compared to 200 hectares of land under cultivation a decade ago.

Officials attribute the drop in cultivation to the increasing popularity of Bt cotton cultivation.

The average castor seed yield per plant is about 2 kg.

The seeds should be plucked immediately after adequate growth as “it will burst if the harvest is delayed,” farmers said pointing to the close vigil they have to keep during the harvest period.

Women farm workers harvest the crop and dry it before separating the beans.

Private oil mills buy these castor beans from traders in Uppilliyapuram market.

Tribal women to market coffee, pepper



The aroma of freshly roasted and packaged coffee, grown by way of natural farming at Kolli Hills by tribal women, would soon be available across the State.

About 615 tonnes of coffee, and 173 tonnes of pepper are grown at various places in Kolli Hills every year.

Tribal women who own a few acres of land cultivate these products, and used to sell to middlemen at a low price.

Now a Kolli Hills Arablee Coffee and Pepper Producers Federation has been formed under the Pudhu Vaazhvu District Society at Thembalam village to help tribal women improve their marketing skills, and give access to technology.

The federation will help them reduce cost of production, and maximise profits through collective action, said S. Rajathi, assistant project manager of the Livelihood.

She said that 1,232 women farmers who possess small lands will cultivate coffee, and pepper and sell to the Common Livelihood Group members, at market price.

After sorting, and grading, and the group members will hand over the products to the members of Common Livelihood Federation.

Machinery at a cost of Rs. 1.48 crore has been installed for bean roasting, grinding, blending, and packing of the products.

The products, 'Kolli Hills Arablee Gold Coffee,' and the 'Kolli Hills Pepper Gold,' will be launched soon.

The products will be made available at Kolli Hills, the Collectorate, and distribution centres across the State.

Coffee beans are now available at Rs. 450 a kg.

The members have applied for 'Participatory Guarantee System' of the Keystone Foundation in Kotagiri, a non-governmental organisation that certifies organic agriculture activities.

Value addition soon for public service centres in Virudhunagar

The 124 public service centres, established in Virudhunagar district under the e-governance scheme, have so far issued 19,105 certificates to the public, according to the Collector, V. Rajaraman.

The centres that dispensed certificates from the Department of Revenue and applications for various welfare schemes implemented by the Department of Social Welfare would soon have more value-added services like payment of electricity bill and booking of tickets, he said.

The service, introduced in Virudhunagar on December 24 last year, now had 112 public service centres operated by primary agriculture

cooperative credit societies and land development banks, four by village poverty eradication committees and eight in taluk offices by the Tamil Nadu Arasu Cable TV Corporation.

The Collector, who inspected the functioning of the centres in Sattur and Virudhunagar taluk offices on Thursday, explained that e-signature of the deputy tahsildar or tahsildar would be affixed in applications seeking certificates from the Department of Revenue within seven days, following which an SMS would be sent to the applicant.

On receipt of the SMS, the applicant can collect the certificate from the public service centre, according to an official press release.

Omolloor farm fair from Sunday

Omolloor Vayal Vanibhom, an annual farm fair organised by the grama panchayat, will begin at Omolloor near here on Sunday.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, P.R. Kuttappan Nair, Omolloor panchayat president, said that the panchayat would celebrate the fifth centenary of the fair this year.

Procession

He said a proclamation procession would be held from Veliyanalloor village in Kollam district to Omolloor on Saturday.

Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan would inaugurate the celebrations on Sunday afternoon.

K. Sivadasan Nair, MLA, would preside over the function. A cultural procession will also be held as a prelude to the inaugural ceremony.

Seminar

District panchayat president R.Haridas Edathitta would inaugurate an agriculture seminar to be held as part of the annual fair.

District Collector S. Harikishore will inaugurate the valedictory meet to be held on March 18 afternoon.

Effects of global warming, on their doorstep

Though the threat of global warming still feels distant for many, it is on the doorstep of those residing at Cherikadavu area of Thevalakara panchayat in Kollam. The situation there reveals that the estuarine islands of Ashtamudi Lake are equally under threat of global warming as Munroethuruthu .

The Kallada river empties into Ashtamudi Lake at Cherikadavu. Not long ago, the 60-hectare estuarine island across Cherikadavu used to be a lush paddy field owned and cultivated by several farmers. Paddy cultivation stopped when salinity in the area increased following construction of the Thenmala dam across the Kallada river.

With global warming taking its toll, the island's geography witnessed a sea change and people there saw for themselves the apocalyptic predictions of environmentalists and climate scientists coming true over the past 20 years.

Modi s next radio address to be on farmers



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said he will address farmers in his next ‘Mann Ki Baat’ radio address which will be aired on March 22. “On March 22, I will talk to my brothers and sisters in the farming community,” Modi tweeted.

He said: “They are welcome to send their suggestions through letters”. “You (farmers) can also send me your suggestions at mygov.in,” the Prime Minister added. IANS

Maximum focus on welfare of farmers: Akhilesh

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Akhilesh Yadav has said that the Samajwadi Party Government was working for the welfare of all sections of the people without any discrimination. He said the stress was on all round development of the State.

In his reply on the debate on the State Budget 2015-2016 in Assembly on Thursday, the Chief Minister listed infrastructure development, education and health sectors as the priorities of his Government with “maximum focus of farmers”. Mr. Yadav refuted the Leader of Opposition, Swami Prasad Maurya’s charge that the Samajwadi Government schemes were copied from the programmes of the Bahujan Samaj Party regime.

“If the schemes were copied from those of the BSP regime then how come the Samajwadi Party formed the Government, and if the BSP Government’s schemes were good then why it lost power,” Mr. Yadav remarked.

The Chief Minister mentioned the decisions taken to link the district headquarters with four-lane highways, the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, which is likely to be completed in 22 months, the laptop scheme and the Samajwadi Pension Yojana. He reiterated that by the year 2016 , efforts would be made to supply 16 hours power to rural areas and 22 to 24 hours supply in the cities.

Officials mulling supply of fodder in drought-hit mandals

The animal husbandry officials are gearing up to overcome the fodder crisis in several parts of the district, particularly the western mandals.

District Joint Director (Animal Husbandry) M. Srinivasa Rao held a review meeting with the department officials here on Thursday and asked the latter to evolve an action plan for fodder distribution in all vulnerable areas by duly coordinating with the farmers.

He said that for the current year, the district administration had declared 42 mandals as drought-hit, adding that steps were being mooted to supply fodder in all these mandals.

Mr. Rao further said that dairy farmers would be supplied with one tonne of fodder grass for Rs. 3, 000 and cattle feed would be provided at Rs. 4 per kg, keeping in view of the prevailing drought conditions. “Village level committees have been formed to monitor the situation. All farmers will be provided with grass stocks up to 500 kg, apart from 120 kg of cattle feed per head.

- *Ryots will be supplied with one tonne of grass for Rs. 3, 000 and cattle feed for Rs. 4 per kg*
- *Village level committees have been formed to monitor the situation*

A differently abled person makes a mark as an entrepreneur



When agriculture and its related activities are proving to be a tough task for normal individuals, Manisha, a differently abled person from Kerala is proving that physical disability (intellectual disability) is not a deterrent when it comes to making a mark in this field as an entrepreneur and getting recognised for it.

Manisha’s father, Mr. Philip M. Simon is an active member of Parivar (National confederation of Parents’ Organisations for persons with intellectual and development disabilities.) It is an association recognised by the Ministry of Social justice and Empowerment.

Typical vocations

The typical vocational activities that the differently abled are taught are making soaps, candles, ornamental flowers, bags etc. However these are monotonous in nature and bore the children, so Manisha's father thought "Why not try something different — like agriculture, horticulture or gardening," since these are being increasingly used in training programmes for such people in foreign countries.

"Initially she grew tomatoes and some other vegetables in grow bags and we could observe that this had a very good impact on her attitude.

"She was very happy to see the crops. But I felt that she was more attracted towards pets and animals — maybe because pets reacted to her. Animal-assisted therapy for mentally challenged or differently abled was also becoming a popular concept in foreign countries and I got an idea about involving her in some sort of farm animal rearing," says Mr. Philip

Not sure

However, he was not sure whether a differently abled person could handle animals or pets.

He contacted the Coordinator, Christian agency for rural development (Card), Krishi Vigyan Kendra at Pathanamthitta for advice.

"During interaction we noticed Manisha getting attracted to some of the rabbit cages in our institute and she immediately moved towards them.

"We suggested to her parents that they can try rabbit rearing in their backyard or terrace if they are interested. The animals are docile and can be easily handled without any fear of getting harmed. With their approval, we asked them to attend a training course first for three days along with the girl to make her feel more comfortable with the animals," explains Dr. C.P. Robert, Programme Coordinator, Christian agency for rural development (Card), Krishi Vigyan Kendra.

Her parents were educated on the important points related to rabbit farming. This was followed by various interaction sessions and advisory

services and conversations. An unused dairy shed was identified to be used to set up the unit.

Eight female and two males (New Zealand White, Soviet Chinchilla and Grey Giant breeds) were given to them. From then on the family took great interest in maintaining the unit scientifically.

All the cages are marked with a hutch card which has the details of the rabbits including the date of birth, fertility date and particulars regarding breeding and delivery.

The rabbitery is divided into three parts with one for breeding females, one for the males, and another area for the kids and bunnies. Sick rabbits are placed in isolation sheds.

Daily routine

Every morning Manisha examines the rabbits for any signs of disease. Then her mother cleans up the shed while she mixes the feed for the rabbits.

Feed consists of wheat bran, maize husk and a pinch of salt. An automatic watering system made of cost-effective tubes takes care of the drinking water.

A thermometer is fixed in the unit to display the temperature and humidity. If the temperature is higher than 30 degree celsius, fans are switched on and a green shade net pulled over the cages to keep the animals cool.

“Manisha's skill for writing are not much developed. So she takes the help of her mother to maintain the breeding and health records of the animals. She is presently selling her rabbits at a rate of 150 per rabbit bunny and 300 to 350 per kg,” says Dr. Sency Mathew, specialist from the Kendra who has been closely interacting with Manisha for the last some years.

Customers

The farm sells rabbits rabbit cages, feeders, waterers and rabbit feed through a website named 'Green carrot agro farms.'

Till date the unit has been able to generate a net profit of around Rs.30,000 annually.

“Her mental development after she entered into the rabbitery field is tremendous. She handles cash to a limit and is part of the decision making process as far as the unit is concerned,” says Dr. Sency.

“Forget the financial income, a sense of independence and self esteem is quite visible in my daughter’s attitude. From whatever I have heard from visitors probably this sort of vocation is the first of its kind in the country to help such persons,” he smiles.

For more information contact Manisha Susan Philip, ValliyathuKalayail Kottathoor P.O, Ayroor-689 614, mobile: 09495606561, phone:04735-230987, email:philipmsimon@rediffmail.com and Dr. Sency Mathew at phone: 04692662094/2661821, mobile: 09947450027.

Training in e-commerce

A four-week training programme to help youth below 30 years find employment in e-commerce will be held at the Government Industrial Training Institute, Guindy from Monday.

The training programme will be carried out by a Bengaluru-based company. Applicants must have cleared higher secondary examinations or possess secondary school leaving certificate.

They should have previous experience in marketing and should have a two-wheeler. Those interested can approach the ITI run by the Directorate of Employment and Training or call 044-2250 1530.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

Avg wholesale onion prices at Lasalgaon increase marginally

NASHIK: The average wholesale onion prices at the country's largest wholesale onion market at Lasalgaon Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) increased marginally by six per cent on Thursday following a rise in demand.

The Lasalgaon APMC reopened on Thursday after two-day holiday on account of Rangpanchami. The average wholesale onion prices in the district, which were in the range of Rs 1,251 to Rs 1,350 a quintal on Monday, increased to the range of Rs 1,351 to Rs 1,440 a quintal on Thursday.

Speaking to TOI, an official from Lasalgaon APMC said, "The average wholesale onion price at the APMC has increased marginally by Rs 100 a quintal because of the demand. But there has been a fluctuation of Rs 100 to Rs 200 a quintal in the prices. The harvest of kharif crop has delayed by two months this season due to delayed monsoon and its arrival is at its peak. The kharif crop has a shelf life of a month only and it rots thereafter."

He added, "The farmers bring the commodity in the market immediately after the harvest and sell them at prevailing market rates. Although the supply has increased, the demand from domestic market has also increased. Hence, the average wholesale onion prices have stabilised in the range from Rs 1,350 to Rs 1,450 a quintal."

The minimum and maximum prices were recorded at Rs 700 and Rs 1,580 a quintal, respectively. Around 24,000 quintals of onions were auctioned at Lasalgaon on Thursday.

At Pimpalgaon, the average wholesale onion price was recorded at Rs 1,351 a quintal on Thursday, against Rs 1,251 a quintal on Monday. The minimum and maximum prices were recorded at Rs 851 and Rs 1,556 a quintal, respectively. Around 14,500 quintals of onions were auctioned at Pimpalgaon on Thursday.

Cotton farmers satisfied over price for yield

TRICHY: Farmers who witnessed moderate cotton yield in some parts of Trichy district are feeling satisfied after getting reasonable price for their produce, thanks to the auction at the regulated market.

On the other hand, some farmers expressed concern over the decrease in yield in others parts of the district.

Going by statistics of the horticulture department here, cotton was cultivated on 16,453 acres in the district.

Pullambadi alone accounted for 9,000 acres. The cotton cultivation was done on 4,000 acres in Mannachanallur area. The rest of the areas were covered in Thuraiyur, Musiri and Thottiyam.

Being a rain-fed crop, cotton cultivation was taken up by the farmers during September and October every year depending on the northeast monsoon for the 150 day crop.

Horticulture department officials said that the harvest was almost over in all parts of the district and they predicted good yield this year compared to last year.

The yield of 8 to 10 quintals is considered to be a good one for farmers.

"We expect timely rainfall will help increase the yield this year. Many farmers cultivated cotton in September or October and completed their harvest. They used to store it until they get the profitable price for their produce," said R Chandrasekar, deputy director, agri business department, Trichy.

The regulated market for auctioning of cotton in Thuraiyur remains a connecting point for cotton traders and farmers. The auction is held every Wednesday. As of March 11, the agri business department conducted 12

auctions in which around 450 quintals of kapas (seed cotton) were marketed at Rs 40.50 maximum and Rs 39 average per one kg. The price is fixed according to the quality of the cotton - medium staple, long staple and extra long staple. Trichy farmers produce medium staple and long staple.

"Being an industrial crop, farmers have to depend on the price fixed by the industries. Brokerage also reduces their profits. The regulated market came to the rescue of the cotton farmers in Trichy and enable them get a profitable price," said N Veerasekaran, Bharathiya Kisan Sangam. The regulated market handled 1,200 quintals of seed cotton cultivated in around 13,000 acres last year.

Though the agriculture department expects increase in yield this year, farmers in Mannachanallur area including Perakambi, Edhumalai, Seedevimangalam, Vaalayur, Sanamangalam, Paalaiyur and MR Palayam cry foul over the decrease in yield.

"Farmers in our area managed to cultivate later due to low rain fall which resulted in low yield of two to four quintals per acre. Further, the attack of a disease also caused a huge loss to us. So, we are unable to enjoy the benefit of regulated market," said Edhumalai T Kumar, district president of famers' wing of BJP Trichy.

THE HINDU **BusinessLine**

Farmers' body demands Rs. 60,000/tonne MSP for castorseed

The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), a Rashtriya Swayamsevak Singh (RSS)-affiliated farmers' group, has urged the Centre to fix a minimum support price (MSP) of Rs.60,000/tonne for castorseed.

Stating that India holds a near-monopoly position in castor production, farmers growing the oilseed should be protected from the present low prices hovering around Rs. 35,000/tonne, around Rs. 10,000 lower than rates during the same period a year ago.

"We met Agriculture Minister Radha Mohan Singh when he visited Gujarat earlier. The Government has to put in place MSP for castorseed as also a minimum export price (MEP) of \$1,800/tonne for its

derivatives,” said Maganbhai Patel, President, BKS (Gujarat region), at a press conference here on Thursday

The cost of cultivating castor, planted between June and July and harvested in January-February, is estimated at Rs. 6,000-7,000/quintal while prices have dropped from Rs. 4,000 to Rs. 3,600 in the past two months. An estimated carryover stock of 6,00,000 tonnes also depressed prices.

Exporter-exchange nexus

Among the reasons cited by the BKS for castor growers’ woes, besides prices having slid by Rs.300/quintal, is the alleged collusion between the country’s chief exporters of castor derivatives with commodity exchanges, such as NCDEX, to suppress prices and favour foreign buyers.

BKS named Jayant Agro Organics Ltd, Adani Wilmar and Gokul Refoils & Solvent Ltd among the exporters for growers’ failure to obtain attractive prices commensurate with the versatility of castor products from buyers abroad.

“Such low prices of export sales depress domestic prices and hurt growers who are denied remunerative returns,” said Patel, adding that farmers had been asked by the BKS to not take their castor crop to the markets for now.

Castor oil finds a wide range of applications as industry fuel, in the paper, paint and pharmaceutical industries and increasingly in cosmetics, which is seeing a shift away from synthetic oils.

Primary buyers include Dutch commodity service provider Nidera and a few importers in the EU, the US and Japan.

Industry estimates peg castor production at 11.5 lakh tonnes (lt) this year, down from 16 lt in 2013-14.

The group also sent a letter to the Agriculture Minister on March 11, outlining estimates of farmers’ losses due to non-procurement of foodgrains and damage from untimely rain.

It also demanded that MSP for all agri-produce be determined on the basis of cost of cultivation and States be allowed to pay bonuses to farmers.