

15.10.2016

THE HINDU

Where tea production is a lasting legacy



The factory was set up by Britishers in 1935 and production is still on the equipment installed then

: Acclaimed as the highest altitude tea plantation in the world, Kolukkumalai, near Munnar, has the unique feature of preserving the British heritage in tea-making at the factory here.

Located at an altitude of 7,130 ft. above sea level, the factory is housed in a two-storey wooden structure set up by the Britishers in 1935 and the method of tea production is still on the equipment installed at that time.

Tea is made here through a process of withering. Manual labour is an integral part of the process, from hand-plucking to the final stage of making tea dust. The factory is set in the ambience of green tea plants on the mountain stretch bordering Tamil Nadu.

Though Kolukkumalai is in Theni district of Tamil Nadu, it is 32 km from Munnar. The story of Kolukkumalai is linked to the tea plantation era of the British Raj in Munnar.

Leased land

The visit of British resident of the erstwhile Travancore Kingdom, John Daniel Munro, to Munnar in 1870s paved the way for tea plantation. He leased the land in 1877 from Poonjar Koikal Rohini Thirunal Kerala Varma and started cultivation of various crops under the North Travancore Land Planting and Agricultural Society. However, it was A.H. Sharp, a European resident who started tea cultivation on 50 acres of land in Munnar in the 1880s.

The tea plantations later extended to the nearby hills, reaching the present border areas of Tamil Nadu. Though tea production in the Kanan Devan Hills is still done in the factories set up by the Britishers, the process and the equipment underwent a lot of change under the modernisation process

An official at the Kolukkumalai factory said the organic method of production is followed here. Since the plantation is located on a peak, the attack of pests is minimum and the natural elements in the soil are preserved. Kolukkumalai also provides a bird's-eye view of land extending up to Kodaikanal and it is also a natural habitat of bird species that are seen in the high altitude ranges.

Aranmula puncha getting ready for cultivation



After a gap of 15 years, the Aranmula puncha (paddy fields) is getting ready for cultivation, thanks to the relentless efforts and initiative taken by Agriculture Minister V.S. Sunil Kumar in this regard.

Preparation of the heavily weeded Aranmula pancha for paddy cultivation is fast progressing and the government has appointed J. Sajeev, award-winning Agriculture Officer, as the Special Officer of the Greening Mission Aranmula programme of the Agriculture Department. Mr. Sajeev and G. Jayaprakash, Assistant Executive Engineer (Agriculture), have been directly supervising the field preparation work under way in the pancha spread across Aranmula, Mallappuzhasserry, and Kidangannur. According to them, the department is planning to launch cultivation in 56 ha. in the initial phase and the remaining portion of the 480 ha. Aranmula pancha will be made arable within a year. Mr. Jayaprakash said six tractors and a junkar fitted with an earthmover had been deployed for clearing the thick weeds from the waterlogged pancha. As much as 12 ha. of paddy land had already been cleared of the weeds, he said.

Mr Sajeev said the Agriculture Department would spend Rs.30,000 for preparing every hectare of the heavily weeded pancha. The district panchayat will provide the required quantity of lime to regulate the soil acidity while the grama panchayats will supply the seeds and fertilizer to the peasants engaged in group farming at Aranmula pancha.

The Agriculture Minister said he had been monitoring the progress of work in Aranmula pancha on a daily basis and the government had taken it up as a prestigious project. Mr. Sunilkumar said Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan was most likely to inaugurate the government's Haritha Keralam programme by launching cultivation in Aranmula Pancha on November 1.

Mr. Sunil Kumar said District Collector R. Girija had been asked to ensure completion of the stream restoration work in the pancha.

UAHS launches pulse seed hub project in Chitradurga



With the objective of promoting the cultivation of pulses, the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga has launched pulse seed hub project at its Zonal Agricultural and Horticultural Research Station (ZAHRS) in Hiriyur in Chitradurga district.

The Ministry of Agriculture has sanctioned an amount of Rs. 1.50 crore to the university for the project. Of this, an amount of Rs. 50 lakh was used to create the infrastructure necessary for seed preservation, processing and packaging at ZAHRS, Hiriyur. The remaining will be maintained as a revolving fund for expenses of production, procurement and processing of seeds.

Food security

C. Vasudevappa, Vice-Chancellor of UAHS, Shivamogga, has said that the objective of the project is to ensure access to quality sowing of seeds of pulses for farmers and thereby enhance the yield of the crop.

Pulses are a rich source of nutrients and the Ministry has planned to enhance their production to strengthen the food security of the nation.

The university will provide the improved varieties of sowing seeds of pigeonpea, green gram, chickpea, black gram, horse gram, cowpea and other pulses developed by it, to the farmers. The technical information of cultivation and harvesting of the pulses will also be provided to them.

Certification

When the crop is ready for harvesting, the university will make arrangements for its certification from competent authorities for usage as sowing seeds. After the formalities related to certification are complete, sowing seeds will be purchased from farmers by agencies such as the Karnataka State Seeds Corporation, he said.

At present, the university is producing 1,000 quintal of sowing seeds of pulses and millets annually on its plots. For the kharif season of 2016, the sowing seeds of pigeonpea provided by the university under the project, have been cultivated in an area of 800 acres by farmers in Shivamogga, Chitradurga and Davangere districts. It has been planned to provide sowing seeds of other pulses including green gram, chickpea, cowpea, horse gram, black gram to farmers in 2017, he added.

Mass harvesting of soyabean commences in Siddipet



A new kind of harvesting commenced in Erravalli and Narsannapet villages of Markook mandal of Siddipet district on Friday. Both these villages were adopted by Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao.

The farmers had sown soyabean in about 200 acres in each village.

The sowing of crop in about 400 acres was completed in June third week and now it has come for harvesting.

At a review meeting at Erravalli on the development of both the villages, Mr. Chandrasekar Rao called for mass harvesting, which he opined would save time and energy for the villagers and there would be no problem of labour if they come forward for mass harvesting.

He also said that the government machinery would be with them in their effort.

The mass harvesting commenced on Friday with District Collector P. Venkatram Reddy harvesting the crop on the farm of Neeruganti Ramulamma having two acres of soyabean.

A man and a woman from each house came forward to participate in the programme and commenced harvesting.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Venkatram Reddy said that this was taken up on an experimental basis and the response from farmers was overwhelming.

“Once this was completed successfully we will extend this method to other crops as well.

All kinds of crops were sown in about 2,800 acres in both the villages and for every crop harvesting we will follow this method,” said Mr. Venkatram Reddy.

It was expected that it may take about one week for the harvesting of soyabean to get completed in both the villages.

Crops were sown in about 2,800 acres in both the villages and same method will be followed in future

Ensure availability of pulses in ration shops’

PMK founder Dr. S. Ramadoss on Friday said palm oil and some pulse varieties were not available in ration shops and this would affect the poor in the festive season.

Pointing to the spiralling prices of dhal varieties owing to lower production in India, he said poor families depended on fair price shops for their daily needs. “Staff at ration shops are refusing to answer when people make inquiries. Stopping the sale of toor dhal, urid dal and palm oil without notice is condemnable,” he said.

If the special PDS scheme was scrapped, then the poor would be the most affected, he said, urging the government to make the essential commodities available in fair price shops before the Deepavali festival.

Small tea growers seek price sharing formula

The Nilgiris Nelikolu Micro and Small Tea Growers and Farmers Development Society (NSTF Society) has called upon the government to implement the 75:25 Realistic Price Sharing Formula for green tea leaves, similar to the formula implemented in Kenya.

In a release, the NSTF Society said that currently a 65:35 price sharing formula was being followed, whereby growers receive 65 per cent of the sale value of the tea, while the rest is passed onto the owner of the tea factory.

“The value of the tea given to the grower is divided into four parts.

“So we receive a fraction of the value of the tea,” said S Raman, president of the NSTF Society.

“Since the present green tea leaves Price Sharing Formula of 65:35 is not favourable to the Nilgiris Small Tea Growers, we are going to insist the government on implementing 75:25 formula, which is successfully implemented in Kenya, wherein, around 6 lakh Kenyan Small Tea Growers are benefited (95% of Kenyan tea is owned by small tea growers, who own around 1 acre each there),” according to the press release.

Kochi tea sale put off on delay in delivery orders

Kochi, October 14:

The issues connected with the pan-India tea auctions rules seem to be cropping up again at the Kochi auction centre, leading to the postponement of auctions this week.

According to Tea Trade Association of Cochin, the non-participation of buyers in the wake of protest over the delay in delivery orders in sale no 38, 39 and 40 at Kochi auctions has led to the rescheduling of auction.

It has been decided to conduct the 41st sale for both dust and leaf categories followed by 42nd on Tuesday after the managing committee of the association met on Friday to discuss issues pertaining to pan-India tea auction.

MK Ajith, Chairman, Tea Trade Association of Cochin, said that the Tea Board Chairman has called for a meeting in Kolkata on Monday (October 17) along with various other stakeholders to discuss the issues being faced by the trade in Kochi.

Delayed delivery orders

Jinesh Dagali, President, Tea Buyers Association, told *BusinessLine* that majority of the buyers have raised their concern over the “post sale” operations administered by the several entities such as NSEit, Bank of India, the settlement bank and the Tea Board.

Most of the buyers are not getting delivery orders for the payment being made at the auctions or refund for an unsuccessful transaction.

The delivery orders are not generated after payments are made.

There have been instances where this has been delayed for almost 10 days.

According to him, majority of the buyers are from the small and medium category who has limited access to financial resources.

There has to be a system to return the funds to buyers on the same day.

The pan-India auction rule stipulates that all refunds should be made within 48 hours.

“We are now able to get the delivery only by the third or fourth day after the sale, which is not at all acceptable. Kochi is the centre where deliveries used to take place even with the progress of the sale,” he said.

Business Standard

Coffee Board eyes 80% replantation

India has managed to achieve only 50 percent of its annual target of covering 5,000 hectares of plantation area so far