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# THE HINDU BusinessLine

## Israel to set up more centres of excellence in agriculture, horticulture



Israeli Ambassador to India Daniel Carmon KVS GIRI  
Hope for early closure of FTA, says Ambassador

Israeli Ambassador to India Daniel Carmon has said Israeli companies are keen to replicate the success achieved back home in India in the areas of irrigation, water tech and agriculture sectors.

During his visit to Hyderabad, sharing his perspective on growing Indo-Israeli diplomatic relations, now celebrating 25th anniversary, the Israeli Ambassador said there are a number of areas which Israeli companies are keen to participate in India growth story engaging with local companies or even Government agencies. However, the focus is currently on agriculture, irrigation and water technologies.

Over the years, the Indo-Israeli trade relations have gone up from about \$600 million in 1992 to over \$ 6 billion in 2014-15. This number does not include defence engagements. “The trade volumes will gallop if the long pending discussions on the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries concludes,” he said.

“Both the countries know the areas of concern and are seeking to address them. Once sorted out, the FTA will play a major role in consolidating the trade,” he said.

“The issue bogs down to address tariff issues and respective stands on the same. The earlier we manage to close it, it would add to the trade. It is for the leadership to decide,” he said.

Referring to the defence engagement with India, the ambassador said defence ties cannot be quantified as the relations go beyond numbers and is much deeper than buying and selling.

“Over the years, we have set up 15 centres of excellence in agriculture in the country across six States in the phase I and II and in the Phase III we propose to set up about 25 centres over the next 2-3 years. Of these two are planned to come up in Andhra Pradesh and two in Telangana and one each are on the verge of being commissioned in Kerala and Tamil Nadu,” he explained.

These centres of excellence in agriculture and horticulture demonstrate best practices which can then be replicated in other locations and guide farmers to improve yields.

“We are also in discussions with some States to see how we can work in the areas of water management, drip irrigation and desalination, where Israeli companies have gained considerable expertise,” he said.

Inviting Indian companies to three mega events being hosted in Israel, he said there are a number of small companies with expertise who can collaborate and work with their Indian counterparts.

The conferences are being hosted in the areas of agri, medical and water technologies.

## THE HINDU

**‘Ladder man’, star attraction at farm science congress**



## **Keshava, who is visually challenged, has sold one lakh ladders**

Keshava A., 41, is popular as 'ladder man' in rural areas of Dakshina Kannada district. Lightweight foldable aluminium ladders designed by him help even women and children climb the tall areca palms or harvest pepper from climbers on tall trees. Not many know that he is visually challenged.

Mr. Keshava was the star attraction for scientists from different parts of the country at the ongoing Agricultural Science Congress here, where he has set up a stall.

"I dropped out of college while doing PU as my vision was affected owing to glaucoma. Now, 90 per cent of my vision is affected and I cannot see anything clearly even if it is very near to me," said Mr. Keshava.

## **Pursuing his dream**

The vision problem, however, did not come in his way of pursuing his dream of helping farmers climb tall areca palms. "As a person from the farming family, I was witness to the problems of farmers because of lack of skilled labourers who can climb areca trees. Hence I designed a lightweight ladder which can not only stretch for 40 to 50 feet, but also have a firm grip on the ground," he said. He has so far sold over one lakh ladders.

About his vision problem, he said, "When I started my enterprise, I was able to see the objects if they were very close to me, but my vision deteriorated in the course of time. It is not an obstacle as I have continued to innovate and also improvised the ladder models."

He has a full-fledged factory in Puttur taluk of Dakshina Kannada which manufactures a range of farm equipment, including ladders, mango/coconut harvesters, sprayer extensions, and arecanut huskers. He has employed 50 people and registers a turnover of about ₹3 crore a year. "According to me, disability is actually a psychological issue and not a physical barrier," said Mr. Keshava. He is now trying to motivate his 10-year-old son who too is affected by vision problem.

The head of the Agricultural Engineering Department of the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru, said, “He is the real hero as he has been successfully operating his enterprise despite being visually challenged.”

### **Techie who extols benefits of organic milk**



### **Techie sets up farm not just to supply milk, but also to breed the best bovines**

Just like his love for IT profession, his passion for organic milk is unadulterated. He doesn't want to milk profits from his supply, but purely believes in maintaining the purity of nature's gift to mankind.

No wonder this IT professional with a comfortable job in the United States has set up an organic farm not just for supplying healthy and unadulterated milk but also to breed the best bovine in the country. “To maintain purity we grow fodder on the 9 acres farm on the outskirts of the city for the 150 animals consisting of 70 cows and 80 buffaloes,” says Kotesch Mukkamala, an IT professional in the USA.

On the eight acres of the 9 acres land, he cultivates green fodder recommended by NG Ranga University to feed the animals year round. The remaining acre is used for housing cattle, staff and other infrastructure. As the grass grown in the cities is produced in the drainage segregation area and is infested with synthetics and human waste here only ground and rain water is used. Cultivation is pesticide and chemical fertiliser-free. Diet of the animals is balanced with the right quantities of protein and fodder.

His passion is also driven by the growing craze for organic milk in cities. Kotesch's Organics Dairy currently services about 300 plus customers supplying 500 plus litres a day. Importantly, milk is delivered within two hours of milking and it never undergoes any processing.

Interestingly, lot of IT and data is used in enhancing the milking capacity of the animals and maintaining quality. "We have established data points and capture mechanisms at various levels like recording milk production patterns during different months, patterns of cattle coming in to heat during different seasons, onset of diseases and they are effectively tackled.

Mr. Kotesch says he has Murrah breed buffaloes procured from several villages in Haryana, the Jaffrabadi breed buffaloes from areas around Bhavnagar in Gujarat. The Holstein cows are from the Kolar area apart from the Ongole cows, Kankrejs, Holsteins, Girs, Ratis, Punganoores, Jerseys, Khillaris and Shahiwals.

After his success with milk, Kotesch wants to get into the breeding domain and supply the best quality semen from the top bulls breed with proper data collection and proven records. "The goal is to supply quality semen doses at optimal pricing to the farmers and help improve the average yield of animals across the country by at least 20% in the next 5 years. This would help make quality milk affordable and available to the poorest of the poor. The plan would encompass training the farmers on the best practices."

## Israeli expertise to develop agriculture



### **To establish Centres of Excellence in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh**

Israel is in the process of setting Centres of Excellence in agriculture development, one or two in Telangana and two in Andhra Pradesh. Already, the country is helping in the implementation of the third phase of the Indo-Israeli Agriculture Cooperation Project where farmers are trained in water management, best farm practices and post-harvest management in different States.

“We are holding discussions with Government officials of the States and how best we can help the farmers. Our drip irrigation methods have been adopted in many places and the Prime Minister’s irrigation scheme only means we expect more Israeli firms to collaborate,” said Israel Ambassador to India Daniel Carmon, in an interaction with presspersons on Wednesday.

### **Desalination plants**

The ambassador said his country has specialised in desalination plants and though eight such plants were operational in different parts in India, more could be started with the technology provided for because water availability is always in shortage here.

Pointing out that the trade between both countries had galloped from \$ 600 million in 1992 to over six billion dollars in 2014-15, Mr. Carmon observed that the potential was huge and if the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is signed, there would be more trade, commerce and collaborations. “It is in the interests of both countries and we have

already held eight rounds of discussions and it would be a gift to India and Israel as we are currently celebrating the 25th year of establishing diplomatic relations,” he said.

Earlier, addressing members of the Federation of Association of Telangana and A.P. Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FATAPCCI), the ambassador said there was so much both countries had to offer each other as there is already strong relationship in several sectors including defence. More could be done in the fields of agriculture, health, pharmaceuticals, academics, cyber space etc. with Indians constituting 10 per cent of foreign students in Israel.

He urged the industry body to send its representatives to three major events happening in his country - Agri-Tech, Med-Tech and Wat-Tech, where the latest technologies in the fields of agriculture, medical industry and water technologies would be showcased as collaborative efforts could be forged between firms of both nations. Mr. Carmon also visited the T-Hub and the ISB where he interacted with the people there. FATAPCCI president Ravinder Modi, DG T.S. Appa Rao, Israel’s Honorary Consul General for AP/TS Ken Udai Sagar also spoke.

### **Turmeric processing centre near Kannamangalam soon**



## **Farmers will be spared the trouble of transporting the spice to Erode; NABARD sanctions ₹1.2 crore for project**

Tiruvannamalai district is going to have its first turmeric processing centre and marketing complex soon at Ammapalayam village near Kannamangalam.

This can be a big relief to turmeric farmers of the district who rely on Erode for processing and marketing turmeric till now.

The West Arani block, where Ammapalayam is located, produces around 500 tonnes of turmeric in a year. The other blocks, including Polur, Arani, Chengam and Pudupalayam, collectively produce around 1,500 tonne, sources said. Though 956 hectares of land were under turmeric cultivation in the year 2012-13, it came down to 638 ha. the very next year and in the current year, there is a further drop in the area and it stood at 381 ha.

The drought situation in the district and fluctuation in the prices were major contributor for the drop in the production.

However, difficulty of transporting the produce to a distant market remained a major discouraging factor, farmers said. They had to transport the produce to Erode, a town located around 250 km from their place.

### **Not enough profit**

The conventional post-harvest management practices such as drying, boiling and polishing prevalent among farmers could not produce good quality that would fetch them superior price.

To help farmers to get out of this situation, a combined turmeric processing centre and marketing complex has been sanctioned under NABARD- Rural Infrastructure Development Fund at a cost of ₹1.2 crore. The Department of Agricultural Marketing and Agri Business is executing the project. Construction of a building is under way.



**Loan, auction facility**

The centre will have a turmeric steam boiler, drying yard, turmeric polisher, grader and a storage godown. Loan facility and auction facility will also be available.

Sources said that with the help of the facility, the quality of turmeric would be superior. Seasonal glut and resultant fall in prices could also be avoided, they said. It is expected that the facility would be ready by June this year.