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First of its kind gene bank at TNAU



Vice-Chancellor of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University P. Murugesha Boopathi (third right) takes a look at 'K. Ramiah Gene Bank' which was opened at Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in the city on Friday.

COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has established a gene bank, first of its kind, in its premises at a cost of Rs. 1.2 crore. It has been named after K. Ramiah, the first Indian Paddy Specialist, and the Founder Director of Central Rice Research Institute, Cuttack.

Sponsored by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, the gene bank has been set up in the newly incepted Department of Plant Genetic Resources of the university.

Inaugurating the state-of-the-art facility, Vice-Chancellor of the university P. Murugesha Boopathi said it was the first of its kind in any State Agricultural University in the county.

The bank was meant for conservation of genetic resources.

Germ plasm collection of cultivars, land races and wild species would be maintained.

Pointing out the salient features of the bank, Director of the Centre for Plant Breeding and Genetics K. Thiyagarajan said it had 3,000 cubic feet of cold storage space for medium and long term storage of plant genetic resources.

“It is planned to store nearly 50,000 germ plasm entries apart from commercially cultivated varieties of crops like rice, millets, pulses, oilseeds, cotton, forages, fruits, vegetables, spices, medicinal and aromatic plants, trees, and bio-energy crops”.

Storage

Explaining the storage process, he said the seeds of the germ plasm accession intended to be stored would be processed adopting scientific principles of seed storage in a precision-controlled-programmed de-humidified chamber and hermetically (air-tight) sealed with trilaminated aluminium pouches before depositing them in the cold room.

The estimated storage life of seeds without loss of viability was likely to be five to 20 years depending upon the nature of the seed.

Plant breeders of the university could reduce the frequency of rejuvenation by depositing the seeds in the gene bank. “They can not only save resources, but also reduce the chance of genetic deterioration that occurs due to out-crossing and admixtures commonly encountered while raising crops in the field,” Mr. Thiyagarajan added. Head of the Department of Plant Genetic Resources P. Shanmugasundaram said the gene bank would also be equipped with facilities to characterise and document germ plasm resources.

It was also planned to create an Internet-based database of the university's germ plasm resources to promote exchange and utilisation among plant breeders and crop scientists.

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World Bank team studies success story of farm project



Spot analysis: Foreign delegates inspecting implementation of TN-IAMWARM project in Villupuram. —

VILLUPURAM: A 42-member World Bank team, led by Sector Manager Karan M. Brooks, visited Villupuram to study the success story of the implementation of the TN-IAMWARM (Tamil Nadu—Irrigated Agriculture Modernisation and Water Bodies Restoration and Management) project, on Thursday.

The team comprised delegates from South Asia and African countries, including the U.S., Thailand, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Uganda and Kenya.

They interacted with farmers at Kootteripattu, Arpampalayam, Kumulam and Thiruvampattu to ascertain their views on the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), in which maximum productivity was achieved through optimal utilisation of water by adopting drip irrigation and sprinkler irrigation systems.

The delegates appreciated the fact that so far 30,000 hectares had been brought under the SRI system in the district and one of the farmers had reaped rich harvest of 10,950 kg of paddy in a hectare.

The delegates sought the experience of the farmers under the 'Vazhnthu Kattuvom Thittam,' the training aspect, bank linkage and marketing arrangements.

The delegates applauded the scheme on learning from the farmers that it had improved their standard of living and helped them get remunerative prices for their produce through direct marketing, thereby eliminating middlemen.

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Minjur desalination plant to be ready by June

CHENNAI: The desalination plant in Minjur will be ready by June and the city will get 100 million litres of drinking water a day, Deputy Chief Minister M.K. Stalin said in the Assembly on Friday.

He made this announcement during a discussion on demands pertaining to municipal administration and Water Supplies Department. He said that the project

was originally conceived during the previous AIADMK regime. But, there was delay in launching the project work owing to legal disputes.

After the DMK came to power in 2006, Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi directed him to take steps to execute the project at the earliest as it would provide drinking water to the people of Chennai. Tenders were floated and the construction work began. But, due to high tide in the sea, the company could not complete the work as per schedule.

As far as the Chennai Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board is concerned, it has completed its part of the work and the Board officials were regularly monitoring the progress of the project. Even on Thursday, they held discussion with officials of the company which is executing the work.

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Farmers seek liberal credit for digging wells

In view of the drought like situation prevailing in the district

TIRUCHI: A section of farmers representatives of Tiruchi district have appealed to the district administration to direct cooperative societies to advance liberal credit for digging wells and purchase of cattle in view of the drought like situation prevailing in the district.

Raising the issue at the Farmers Grievance Day meeting here on Friday, P .Ayyakannu, State general secretary, Bharathiya Kisan Sangh, said that the scorching summer and the absence of summer showers coupled with the power crisis and unremunerative prices for their produce have pushed farmers into a corner. Cooperative societies should advance credit to farmers liberally for digging

wells and purchase of cattle so as to help them to come out of the crisis. Many farmers were unable to get credit as cooperative societies maintain that they could get fresh loans only on repaying their existing dues.

He also urged the district administration to advise the cooperative banks against initiating distraint proceedings against farmers. A. Nagarajan of Puliur said cattle population was dwindling in the villages and it was necessary that farmers were advanced credit to purchase milch animals to supplement their income. Farmers were not even able to get organic manure for the fields, he observed.

Claiming that farmers were facing severe labour shortage in Lalgudi, Musiri and Thottiyam areas, for harvesting blackgram and banana, he urged the Collector T. Soundiah, who was in the chair, to suspend the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for a couple of months.

A. Karuppanan, district secretary of the farmers' wing of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, called upon the Agriculture Department to initiate immediate measures to control pest attack in tapioca crop in Manapparai and Vaiyampatti areas. He urged the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board to check voltage fluctuations in some parts of Manapparai region, which were damaging agricultural motors, causing heavy losses to farmers. R. Raja Chidambaram, State Secretary, Tamizhaga Vivasayigal Sangam, said crop insurance premium should not be collected from farmers unless compensation was guaranteed in case of crop insurance. Currently, compensation was granted only if crop damages were reported in an entire firka. At Mutharajapalayam village, banana crops were felled by a squall recently but farmers were unable to get any compensation despite having paid the premium. He also demanded that farmers be allowed to take the 'vandal' for agricultural purpose or own use from tanks/ponds as per a government order.

Earlier, N. Ponnusamy, Joint Director of Agriculture, informed the farmers that the Forest Department has, for the first time in the district, sanctioned compensation for a few farmers of Musiri region whose crops were damaged by peacocks some

months back.

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“Allocate funds for water scheme for Kovilpatti”

Adequate steps should be taken to implement it: CPI (M)

Tuticorin: The people of Tuticorin, especially the employees, will be delighted, G. Ramakrishnan, State secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist), has said while referring to the re-functioning of SPIC Industries, which is expected on May 1, 2010.

The prospects of the industry could be made viable if gas was used instead of naphtha oil, which was expensive, he said while addressing the media at the party office here on Friday.

He also said that the CPI (M) was insisting on the implementation of the Sethu Canal project. But unfortunately the implementation of the project was being deferred. It was unfair that a Member of Parliament remained absent in Parliament when it was in session, he said referring to M.K. Alagiri, Minister for Fertilizers and Chemicals.

The people had chosen him to represent their demands in Parliament but how could he fulfil their aspirations when he was not able to attend the session, he asked.

The government should allocate a sum of Rs. 50 crore for implementing the combined water scheme in Kovilpatti to rectify the problem of water scarcity. Adequate steps should be taken to implement the scheme on a war footing.

The excise duty for matches should be decreased by 4 per cent from the existing 10.33 per cent. To eradicate usury, the party would organise a conference on May 23 seeking stringent enforcement of the anti-usury law.

He charged that the Central Government “had failed” to contain prices of essential commodities, which affected the common people. There was a shortage of power in the State due to provision of uninterrupted supply to multinational companies, he claimed. The public were affected by unscheduled power cuts and the worst hit were farmers. Industrial production was also hit, he said.

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Flower theft in Ooty

Udhagamandalam: While house breaking, theft, shop lifting and similar crimes in various parts of the Nilgiris district are brought to the notice of the police and subsequently conveyed to the public through the print and visual media, one kind of crime which has been going on for many years particularly during the summer seldom finds its way into the records of the police. It relates to the theft of flowers.

It is a source of concern not only among the people with private gardens but also for those in charge of public gardens like the Government Botanical Garden.

Recently, those managing the garden were forced to impose restrictions on people who came to the garden every morning for walking because it was found that flowers like ranunculus which were painstakingly cultivated in the beds were surreptitiously removed by some unidentified persons.

Though not a common topic, the activities of flower thieves are discussed animatedly in houses with flower gardens. Some of them told The Hindu that the

flower thieves keep track of the growth of the flowers in private gardens and strike when the flowers are in bloom.

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Fishermen oppose desalination plant

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Chennai, April 23: Deputy chief minister M.K. Stalin's pet project and the state government's projected solution to the city's perennial water woes, the 100 million-litre-a-day desalination plant at Nemmeli appears to have irked fishermen in Kancheepuram district who fear that the discharge could seriously affect their livelihood.

At a press meet organised by a joint action committee comprising several fishermen forums to protest the setting up of the plant, the members claimed that the salinity of the seawater near the coast could increase drastically and wipe out fish from the area for a few kilometres from the plant.

"Studies have already proved that the salinity level of water near the Kancheepuram coast is 33 ppt which is higher than even our neighbouring state Andhra Pradesh where it is 32 ppt. Even this minor difference has wiped out several species like the expensive tiger prawn from our coast," said K. Bharathi, president of the South Indian Fisherman Welfare Association.

The group claimed that fishermen from Nemmeli, Sulerikattukuppam, Pudu

Kalpakkam, etc., would be worst affected since they fished near the shore.

They called for an urgent rethink on the project.

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By V Gangadharan

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Palmyra fruit hits 'hot' market

CHENNAI: With Chennai bracing for even hotter days, palmyra fruit - called as nungu in Tamil - has started arriving in good numbers to help quench the thirst. Be it Alandur, Adambakkam or Pazhavanthangal, nungu vendors are becoming ubiquitous in suburban localities.

Along with nungu, tender coconut, watermelon, muskmelon, cucumber and other summer vegetables have lined up to take on the dog days.

"Nungu contains minerals, has no fat or protein," said Sunita Kumar, a consumer, adding that its high water content and affordability makes it a popular summer choice.

"You get five fruits kernels for just Rs 10," she said. According to nutritionist Shiny Chandran, it is always right to consume seasonal fruits as they are fresh and come with all the goodness of nature.

"Eating orange now cannot be a good choice. Fruits like nungu, muskmelon and watermelon are low in calories, have rich moisture, contain fewer calories and are easy to digest. Jackfruit, papaya and ripe mangoes are rich in fibre and have betacarotines." K Sivarama Gounder, a farmer owning palm trees in Pathiri village, 20 km from Tindivanam and selling nungu in Palavanthangal, said the sale was

reasonably good though the price was not satisfactory.

Apart from summer fruits, a whole lot of accessories like sunglasses, caps and hats are making a killing. S Rajesh, a vendor on GST Road, said all new varieties that he got last week were exhausted.

Not everyone, however, is bothered about summer fruits or sunglasses.

For fifty-year-old J Kumaresan, a roadside puncture shop owner near Adambakkam, the best way to take on heat is to face it. "You become used to it when you face it. If you feel thirsty take plenty of buttermilk.

This is what I have been doing for 30 years now."

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Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Clear

Saturday, Apr 24

Max Min

36.8° | 27.7°

Rain: 00mm in24hrs Sunrise: 05:53

Humidity: 34% Sunset: 18:23

Wind: Normal Barometer: 1008.1mb

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Sunday, Apr 25

Max Min

37° | 28°

Extended Forecast for a week

Monday

Apr 26



Tuesday

Apr 27



Wednesday

Apr 28



Thursday

Apr 29



Friday

Apr 30



36° 28°	36° 28°	35° 27°	36° 27°	36° 27°
Partly Cloudy	Tstorm	Tstorm	Tstorm	Partly Cloudy