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Farmers skeptical about treatment plants

Staff Reporter

Two CETPs yet to get environment clearance

Concern over monitoring procedures

Tirupur: Anxieties raised by farmers and civic body representatives over the credibility of functioning of zero liquid discharge mechanism dominated the public hearing conducted by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board on Thursday to obtain views on the two Common Effluent Treatment Plants set up at in Tirupur recently.

TNPCB sources said that the plants, Park CETP at Pitchampalayam and Vettuvapalayam CETP at Mangalam, had not been commissioned yet for the want of environmental clearance from the Union Government.

“The requisite clearance will be given based on the public views in the meeting,” officials added. Though the promoters of the plants claimed that no treated effluent would get discharged into the River Noyyal, the majority of the farming community attended the meeting thought otherwise.

“The same textile fraternity, a day ago, have stated that it is impossible to achieve zero liquid discharge,” pointed out Uzhaivar Uzhaipalar Katchi state advisor K.C.M. Balasubramanian, hinting at the media release issued by an industrial association in this connection.

Farmers representatives like K.C. Ponnusamy and K.C.M. Balasubramanian also questioned the approval given by the authorities concerned to construct CETPs close to River Noyyal and its tributaries.

“When there is rule that stipulate such dyeing-related units should not be built within a distance of 5 km from the river system, who gave the permission to these CETP promoters to go ahead with its construction,” farmers asked. TNPCB District Environmental Engineer R. Kannan clarified that the rule was not applicable to “extended facility of the existing industry” like CETPs, which were extension of textile production units.

The presidents of Thottipalayam and Chettiapalayam panchayats, C. Rangasamy

and K. Marappan, raised concern over the monitoring procedures.

“We have a bitter history of CETPs functioning and still large quantities of effluent ‘mysteriously’ finding its way into River Noyyal.”

Some ‘planted opinions’ raised by a section of audience evoked laughter as three persons stated that they were not facing any problems due to the CETPs and the plants were ensuring zero discharge little realising that the plants were yet to be opened.

Though the hearing was held at Collectorate and District Collector himself chaired the proceedings, the office of District Public Relation Officer did not intimate media personnel stating that they were ‘unaware’ of the event. It created an embarrassment as Collector had to ask explanation from District PRO why the lapse occurred.

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Youth gets subsidy for agri clinic

Staff Reporter



HELP: Pudukottai Collector A. Suganthi giving away subsidy to Ravindrakumar for setting up the agri-clinic near Aranthangi.

PUDUKOTTAI: The Centrally-sponsored National Agricultural Development Programme (NADP) has encouraged a post-graduate in Agriculture to set up the Agri-Clinic and Mini Soil Testing Laboratory in Aranthangi block in the district.

The youth, A. Ravindrakumar, has embarked upon the project at a total outlay of Rs. 6 lakh. While the Centre sanctions a subsidy of Rs. 3 lakh under the NADP, the youth has gone in for loan for an equal sum from a nationalised bank.

Mr. Ravindrakumar sees more prospects for his Agri Clinic in the wake of the district administration’s special efforts to enhance copra cultivation in the Aranthangi belt.

“The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has developed a special tonic for enhancing the quality of coconut. I shall transfer this latest technology among the coconut growers of this coastal area,” he said.

R.M. Sivakumar, Assistant Director of Agriculture, said that a sum of Rs.23.67 lakh has been sanctioned for the Aranthangi block under the NADP.

A maximum of Rs. 13 lakh has been sanctioned for raising sugarcane on 20 hectares under precision farming technique in Maramadakki village. The per hectare subsidy was Rs.65,000 for this cash crop.

Collector A. Suganthi gave away the subsidy to the youth, and appealed to the villagers to make the most of the NADP.

The Agri Clinic and Mini Soil Testing Laboratory would guide farmers to ascertain the deficiency of nutrients in the soil of their fields. The Collector also inaugurated a special campaign on the crops ideal for the ‘rabi’ season organised by District Agricultural Technology Management Agency.

S. Muthusamy, president of District Panchayat; U. Ramathilagam Udaiyappan, Chairperson of Pudukottai Municipality; and B. Krishnasamy, Joint Director of Agriculture (in-charge) were among those who spoke.

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Solar electric fence to be installed: Minister

Staff Reporter

To a distance 1,400 km along borders of reserve forests



JUMBO PROBLEM: Forest officers explaining elephant movement to Forest Minister N. Selvaraj at Sattaparai near Palani on Friday. Revenue Minister I Periasamy and Collector M. Vallalar look on.

PALANI: Solar electric fence would be installed to a distance 1,400 km along borders of reserve forests to prevent migration of wild animals into agriculture fields from reserve forests area.

Special care will be taken to Palni hills to restrict movement of wild elephants that have been camping in Ayakudi forests range for more than six years, according to N. Selvaraj, Minister for Forests.

He was talking to presspersons after disbursing compensation to farmers for loss of crops, owing to wild animal attack at Sattaparai near Ayakudi on Friday.

Already the Forest Department had made solar fence covering a distance of 909 kilometres at a cost of Rs.14.58 crore.

Two herds with 22 wild elephants, including two calves, which migrated from the Amaravathi forests range, have been camping in this area for the past six years.

Availability of sumptuous food like maize and banana crops at villages near the RF tempted the elephants to stay there.

Already, forest officials had chased these animals into the forests. But again, they came to this spot and destroyed the crops.

Raid increased

Wild animals raided several farms near the RF 295 times in the past five years. Raid has been increasing every year and touched its peak in 2008-09 as forest officials recorded 119 raids. Six persons were killed between 2005 and 2010.

The government had relaxed guidelines to provide compensation to all people affected by wild animals, he added.

“Step would be taken to close entry points of wild animal into villages from RF.”

The forests officials explained to the Minister that massive encroachment upon the reserve forests and destruction of elephant path, a regular migratory way, by the local people, was the main reason for frequent raids.

With disturbance of the routine path, they have started using patta land as its path to move from one side of the reserve forests into the other side.

Cooperation of locals necessary

Cooperation of the local people was necessary to divert animals and allot separate path for them to move freely.

Massive human disturbance had irked wild animals, they added.

Mr. Selvaraj disbursed Rs.18,000 to nine farmers whose lands were destroyed by wild animals.

Revenue Minister I. Periasamy, Collector M. Vallalar, Conservator of Forests Raghuram Singh and District Forest Officer P. Thangaraj, Assistant Conservator of

Forests, Velusamy accompanied him.

A wild elephant killed a farmer and injured his wife at Sattaparai recently.

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NABARD project to augment productivity of lead crops

T. Ramakrishnan

20-30 villages in each State will be covered

(kg/ha)

	Tamil Nadu	All-India
2004-2005	1,874	1,652
2005-2006	1,847	1,725
2006-2007	2,610	1,756
2007-2008	2,125	1,854*

* Advanced Estimates released in July 2008

Source: Website of the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation of the Union government and State Focus Paper 2010-2011 for Tamil Nadu prepared by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development

CHENNAI: The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) plans to launch a nationwide project in April for augmenting the productivity of lead crops/activities through sustainable agricultural practices.

On a pilot basis, 20 to 30 villages in each State will be covered. Sources in the NABARD say the process of identifying villages in Tamil Nadu is yet to be finalised.

The objective of the project is to augment productivity of the lead crops/activities through adoption of appropriate technologies, which will result in increased income to farmers. The project will focus on 3-4 lead crops/activities such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables, fruit crops and dairy.

In the selected villages, all the schemes of the Central and State governments besides those of the Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVK), Commodity Boards and NABARD would be converged to the extent possible.

The Project Facilitating Agency (PFA) could be institutions such as agricultural universities, regional training centres, KVKs, federations of farmers' clubs, or non-governmental organisations specialising in the farm sector.

NABARD would provide need-based support either as grant or loan for the different components of the project, according to the State Focus Paper prepared it for Tamil Nadu for 2010-2011.

Talking of the State's production and productivity, the NABARD's document states that the production of food grains – paddy (rice), millets and pulses – recorded a decrease of 16.81 lakh tonnes or 20.3 per cent during 2007-2008 against the previous year's performance.

The State's production went down from 82.62 lakh tonnes in 2006-2007 to 65.82 lakh tonnes in 2007-08.

Productivity of rice, a major constituent accounting for 77 per cent of the total food grain production in the State, declined from 3,423 kg per hectare in 2006-07 to 2817 kg/ha in 2007-2008.

Officials of the State Agriculture Department explain that heavy rains in December 2007 and March 2008 adversely affected the production and thus, productivity. Pulses, representing nearly one-fifths of the food grains, also experienced a fall in its production by 36 per cent. The yield went down from 541 kg/ha in 2006-2007 to 303 kg/ha the next year.

Only millets escaped the wrath of the nature. Production of the crop, which is not considered season-specific, remained more or less the same at about 13.6 lakh tonnes in the two years.

According to the NABARD document, the provisional figures of production of rice, millets and pulses during 2008-2009 were 64.61 lakh tonnes, 21.95 lakh tonnes and 4.6 lakh tonnes.

The figures of yield for the three crops were 2,817 kg/ha, 2,571 kg/ha and 303 kg/ha. The average yield of food grains was 2,125 kg/ha.

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Mettur level

The water level at the Mettur dam stood at 77.08 feet on Friday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 868 cusecs and the discharge 2,000 cusecs.

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Karunanidhi on draft Fisheries Bill

CHENNAI: Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi on Friday wondered why those who were instigating fishermen to go on agitation could not comprehend Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar's clarification on the draft Marine Fisheries (Regulation and Management) Bill even though the fishermen could understand it.

In a statement, the Chief Minister referred to the statement of Mr. Pawar issued a few days ago, in which he had assured representatives of fishermen that the Centre would take a decision only after hearing the views of different sections of society.

On the move to hire retired employees, he reiterated that the government would not do anything that would adversely affect employment chances of the youth. —
Special Correspondent

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‘Nanotechnology has wide range of applications’

Special Correspondent

— Photo:Special Arrangement



M.R. Srinivasan, former Chairman of Atomic Energy Commission, addressing a national conference on ‘Multifunctional Nanomaterials and Nanocomposites’ at Bharathiar University in Coimbatore on Thursday.

Coimbatore: Nanomaterials produce extremely fascinating and useful properties that can be exploited for a variety of engineering and societal applications, former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission M.R. Srinivasan said here on Thursday.

Inaugurating a national conference on ‘Multifunctional Nanomaterials and Nanocomposites’ at Bharathiar University, he said the recent improvement in technologies to visualise and manipulate had led the field on nanomaterials being extensively explored by government, research and academic communities.

The fundamentals of nuclear energy production began with the science of understanding the sub-atomic particles like neutron and the technology of capitalising on their dynamics in producing energy through fissile atoms.

Hence, the scientists and technologists in the nuclear field had been manipulating atomic and sub-atomic features over a few decades for real time applications.

Research and development in atomic dimensions had been carried out in the area of nuclear fuels, core and structural materials, sensors, devices and instrumentation by nuclear and material scientists, reactor physicists and engineers.

New avenues

The recent development in nanotechnology was an additional dimension to this, as it opened avenues for manipulating the atoms and their functions in real time.

Explaining various applications, Mr. Srinivasan said nanotechnology could be effective even in the purification of water. It offered the possibility of an efficient removal of pollutants and germs.

Vice-Chancellor of the university C. Swaminathan said its nanotechnology department was carved out of the Department of Physics as part of a significant stress given to this field. Facilities needed for conducting nano research were developed recently.

The State Government had sanctioned Rs.1 crore as seed money to procure sophisticated instruments for the department. The university had also allocated Rs. 40 lakh for the department's development. Apart from these initiatives, individual faculty members had also obtained project funds from various agencies such as the Defence Research and Development Organisation, Department of Science and Technology and the University Grants Commission to conduct research in nanoscience and technology. One of the thrust areas of the university was bio-nanotechnology.

Mr. Swaminathan hoped that nanotechnology would help in arriving at solutions for many new health problems in the community.

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Water released from Vaniyar Dam

Staff Reporter

DHARMAPURI: As requisitioned by farmers of the Vaniyar ayacut, P. Amutha, Collector, released water from Vaniyar Dam on January 30 for irrigation to lakes in old ayacut area and left and right main canals.

Water would be released on a rotation basis to the canals by dividing it into two zones. Lakes in old ayacut areas such as Venkatasamuthram, Alapuram, Ondhiampatti, Thenkaraikottai and Parayapatti will get 75 cft a day for 20 days through right main canal. Through left main canal 16 villages such as Venkatasamuthram, Alapuram, Ondhiampatti, Thenkaraikottai, Parayapatti, Molayanur, Kozhimookanur, Pappireddypatti, Adhikarapatti, Thathampatti, Koundampatti, Pudhupatti, Deverajapalayam, Menaci, Boothanatham and

Jammanaalli will benefit.

Ms. Amutha asked farmers to use the water judiciously to reap maximum benefit with the cooperation of the officials of the Public Works Department.

V. Mullaivendan, MLA, K. Priya, Deputy Collector, Moyeesan, RDO, Harur, Mani, Executive Engineer (Water Resources Organisation), among others participated.

Later, Ms. Amutha inspected the Sri Lanka refugee camp and promised camp members that all basic facilities would be provided to them, says a release.

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Farmers stage protest against Bt brinjal

Staff Reporter

— Photo: S. James



***UP IN ARMS:* Farmers staging a demonstration in the city on Friday.**

MADURAI: Members of the Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association staged a protest here on Friday against introduction of the Bt brinjal, the controversial genetically modified crop, in Madurai.

The association pointed out that normal brinjal was being cultivated in nearly 70,000 acres in Usilampatti, Tirumangalam and Chellampatti areas of Madurai district. The farmers feared that introducing Bt brinjal would greatly harm their livelihood and have an adverse impact on the farm lands. The agitators also called for a ban on the crop.

It also called for forming a committee along the lines of the one formed by the Central Government to elicit public opinion on the issue. K. Devaraj presided over the agitation. State vice-president K. Mohammed Ali, district secretary T. Chellakannu and Ba. Rani took part.

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Water level

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Friday stood at 113.30 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 9 cusecs and discharge of 400 cusecs. The level in Vaigai dam was 40.65 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 133 cusecs and discharge of 1,860 cusecs. There was no rainfall.

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Successful harvesting of spiny lobsters done

Special Correspondent

By Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Mandapam

— Photo: L. Balachandar.



***NET RESULT:* A fisherman with the harvested lobsters at Mandapam on Friday.**

RAMANATHAPURAM: The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), Mandapam, has successfully harvested spiny lobsters, a most sought species of shellfish in the international market, through cage culture for the first time in the southern coast of the State.

It has been demonstrated that the lobster, which is facing the danger of extinction, owing to unhealthy practice of using bottom set gill nets that results in catching of a lot of juvenile lobsters, can be cultured in large scale in order to boost the economy of fishermen.

As per the initiative, the CMFRI with the field level participation of Fishermen and Handicapped Education Economic Development Trust (FHEEDT) floated about 10 cages made up of high density polyethylene pipes covered by nets in the sea of Mandapam about three months ago. The juvenile lobsters, which were collected from fishermen, were let in the sea case of six diameters. They were fed with trash fishes. Now, they have reached the exportable size, fetching a price of Rs.1000 per kg.

“The farming of juvenile spiny lobsters is not only a process of value-addition but also an easy way of lobster conservation. Moreover, the development and maintenance of brood stocks of lobsters in sea cages will replenish the natural stock of lobsters,” said G. Gopa Kumar, Scientist-In-Charge, CMFRI, Mandapam.

He said the cost of production per crop would be around Rs.95000 including Rs.67000 production cost, which included the cost of juveniles, feed, labour and others. The yield of lobsters through a crop could be sold for Rs.2.40 lakh, realising a net income of Rs.1.46 lakh.

He added that it had been proved that cage farming of spiny lobsters could pave the way for the development of commercial level farming ventures in the region through self-help groups. The CMFRI would provide assistance for an economically viable alternate livelihood option for fishermen.

K. Aldrin, president, FHEEDT, said the members of a self-help group, who were all physically handicapped, had actively involved in the initiative. It had already started selling lobsters to the export buyers. The successful programme might motivate other fishermen groups to take up cage culture in a big way.

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Quenching thirst

Photo:M_Srinath



FRESH AND JUICY: Welcoming summer, water melons have arrived in plenty on Medical College Road in Thanjavur on Friday. —

CWC flays Pawar on prices talk, says forecasts cue to biz lobbies

TNN, 6 February 2010, 09:30am IST

NEW DELHI: In a frontal attack on agriculture minister Sharad Pawar, the Congress Working Committee on Friday faulted him for his tendency to talk up prices.

With price rise dominating the deliberations, several members of the party's key decision-making body said Pawar, with his 'weather forecasts' of shortage of certain commodities, was giving business lobbies a cue to hike prices.

The bid by NCP chief to get even with an offensive Congress by calling price rise a "collective decision" and thereby shift the blame on the prime minister also came in for blistering attack when leaders called it unprecedented and unhealthy in democracy.

The two-pronged attack, without the senior minister's name being mentioned even once - a degree of discipline that pointed to coordination among critics - formed the crux of the CWC meeting which devoted a chunk of its three-hour marathon brainstorming to the issue of price rise. As many as 18 people spoke on the issue.

The sustained rise in food prices and the issue of inflation in general is troubling the ruling dispensation in view of the public mood which is turning from anger to hostility.

AICC general secretary Janardan Dwivedi, briefing on CWC deliberations, said price rise was among the top issues flagged by party chief Sonia Gandhi for discussion at the meeting.

While Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and finance minister Pranab Mukherjee expressed hope that the situation would ease soon, the highlight of the meeting were the jibes at Pawar. The two parties have been at loggerheads for a while, with Congress smarting from the feeling that it was having to take flak for the shooting inflation when it was the NCP chief who held the portfolios relating to food and farm sector.

The references to Pawar related to his recent remarks about milk scarcity. Mentioning only the ministry, some CWC members virtually mauled him for what they termed his failure to hold prices. It was said that his announcements on shortage of food items were giving an indication to lobbies which were pushing up prices.

Satyavrat Chaturvedi, in fact, took exception to Pawar's comment over "collective responsibility" on price issue, a view which was interpreted by Congress as the Maratha leader's way of shifting blame on the PM and thus on Congress. Pawar had said in a Cabinet system, the government was headed by PM and there was collective responsibility for decisions.

The Congress leader said it had not happened in the past. He pointed out that as the PM had given full autonomy to his Cabinet ministers, so it would be wrong to hold him responsible for the failure of a particular ministry.

Congress members called for effective steps to streamline the functioning of agriculture ministry and a thorough revamp of the Food Corporation of India to make the supply chain more efficient.

In his intervention, PM Manmohan Singh sought to explain food inflation as part of a global phenomenon. He said steps were being taken to bring down the prices.

Recalling his government's success in bringing the country out of recession last year, he hoped prices would be brought under control soon.

The situation was partly attributed by Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot to the higher purchasing power of people leading to more consumption.

A party veteran, however, wondered why Congress-ruled states had not yet cracked down on hoarders and black-marketeers. Some CMs promised action and results in two weeks.

The members told finance minister Pranab Mukherjee that his budget should be people-oriented.

Price rise on mind, PM and Sonia attend CWC meeting

IANS, 5 February 2010, 02:17pm IST

NEW DELHI: The Congress Working Committee (CWC), including Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, met here Friday amid concerns over the rising prices of essential commodities.

The meeting -- also attended by chief ministers of Congress-ruled states, except Maharashtra where party general secretary Rahul Gandhi is visiting -- comes a day ahead of a conference of chief ministers convened by the prime minister to discuss rising prices.

Congress sources said no agenda had been circulated for the meeting of CWC, the highest decision making body of the party. However, it is expected to chart out the party's response to efforts by chief ministers of opposition-ruled states to put the blame for price rise at the door of the central government.

Chief ministers of opposition-ruled Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar apart from Uttar Pradesh have been vocal in blaming the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government for failing to check rising prices.

A section of the Congress has sought to target Agriculture Minister and Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar for the spiralling prices. The minister hit back saying the decisions on price policy had been taken by the union cabinet.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Left have chalked out plans to target the Congress over price rise in the forthcoming budget session of parliament beginning Feb 22.