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## NABARD sanctions Rs. 2.88 crore for development of tribals

R. Arivanantham

*916 tribal families in Krishnagiri district will benefit from the fund*

KRISHNAGIRI: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has sanctioned Rs. 2.88 crore for development of tribals in Tamil Nadu.

The project will help in improving the livelihood of 916 tribal families in three clusters in Thaly and Kelamangalam blocks of Krishnagiri district.

V. Thirumalai, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, told *The Hindu* that such a project had been sanctioned for the first time for Tamil Nadu.

Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency (MYRADA), a Hosur-based NGO, will be the nodal and implementing agency for the project.

The grant has to be utilised in the next seven years for the livelihood development of tribals in Luxmipuram, Kodagarai and Bettamugilalam village panchayats in Thaly and Kelemangalam panchayat unions in the district.

### 'Wadi' model

A development model like the one adopted in Wadi, a village in Gujarat, has been found to be very effective in creating sustainable livelihoods for tribal families.

In order to support tribal families in other parts of the country, NABARD has created a dedicated fund called 'Tribal Development Fund' (TDF) with a corpus of Rs. 50 crore. The Fund will be used as loan or grant to support the implementation of 'Wadi' model and micro enterprises undertaken by tribal families in tribal dominant areas of the country.

The 'Wadi model' stands out as a sustainable model suitable for replication in other tribal areas.

Under this programme, MYRADA in association with NABARD would engage the tribals in orchard development, soil conservation, water resource management, sustainable agriculture, community development, women development, community health, micro-enterprises for landless people, processing and marketing and other auxiliary programmes.

## Development of women

Increased emphasis and concerted efforts would be given to the participation of women in the programme. Major activities that would be taken up would include promotion of SHGs, income generation activities, drudgery reduction along with awareness generation about reproductive health and development aspects.

The income generating activities included fruit and forest plant nurseries, vegetable cultivation, produce collection, papad making, vermin composting etc.

In order to reduce work for women, smokeless stoves, use of bearings in the traditional grinding stones and pedal thresher for paddy would be introduced.

Besides the land holding families, the programme would support the landless by providing micro-enterprises in farm and non-farm sectors and employment opportunities in processing units.

## Marketing

The TDF programme has been designed to ensure good prices for the produce. Decentralised processing facilities for their produce would be established.

This would facilitate creation of employment opportunities for landless tribal families in the project area and also ensure appropriate price for the farm produce by providing captive market for raw materials and better returns through value addition, Mr. Thirumalai added.

The project will be inaugurated by Vishwanath A Shegaonkar, Principal Secretary, Tribal Welfare Department, in the presence of V.K. Shanmugam, Collector, R. Narayan, Chief General Manager, Tamil Nadu Region, NABARD, at Kottaiyur village in Kelamangalam Panchayat Union, Denkanikottai Taluk on February 20.

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## “Farmers must assert their rights as consumers”

Special Correspondent

VILLUPURAM: Farmers should also view themselves as consumers and only then could they stake claim to compensation wherever there is deficiency of services. This point was stressed at a meeting of farmers convened here by District Supply Officer Ashok Kumar.

Assistant Directors of Agriculture and Sericulture Departments K. Rajasekar and S. Rajasekaran and farmers’ representatives participated. The officials exhorted the farmers to get bills or receipts for every purchase of farm inputs.

They must keep the receipts issued by the Agriculture Market Committee in safe custody to assert their rights whenever they came across any shortcomings. If they could not get the projected yield from the seeds, they could seek compensation.

The officials also spoke about the Consumer Act and the ways and means of getting compensation.

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### **Mettur level**

The water level at the Mettur dam stood at 76.08 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 868 cusecs and the discharge 1,800 cusecs.

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### **Thousands run to create awareness on global warming**

Staff Reporter

*Top 10 finishers from each category have qualified for State-level meet*

Photo: M. Balaji



***For a cause: Students participating in the marathon held in Tirupur on Sunday to create awareness on global warming. –***

Tirupur: Over 6,000 people took part in the Tirupur Marathon-2010 held on the theme of 'global warming,' here on Sunday.

The event was organised by the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu (SDAT) in association with Muyarchi, an NGO, as a selection race to the State-level marathon planned by SDAT in Chennai on February 21.

While the participants in the men's category covered 15 km, the distances in

women's, boys' (Under-18) and girls' (Under-18) categories were fixed at seven, five, six and five km.

District Sports Officer R. Venkataraman said that marathon would be held for its full distance of 42.195 km (26 miles and 385 yards) as approved by the International Amateur Athletic Federation in the State-level Meet, apart from the mini-marathon races.

Following persons are the winners in respective categories: K. Dhakshinamoorthy (men); K. Maheswari (women); R. Mohanraj (boys) and Jahnsi Rani (girls).

The winners were awarded gold coins, cash prize and citations. Those who secured second to tenth places in each category got cash prizes and certificates.

The top ten finishers from each category had qualified for the State-level Meet.

“The expenses for travel and stay of the qualifiers will be borne by SDAT,” Mr. Venkataraman said.

Minister for Highways and Minor Ports M. P. Saminathan gave away prizes to the winners.

He distributed small cups as token of appreciation to Collector C. Samayamoorthy, and Superintendent of Police A. Arun, who took part and completed the race as ambassadors spreading messages on ‘ill-effects of global warming.’

Earlier, Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Arumugam Sakthivel flagged off the marathon in front of St. Joseph's School along Tirupur-Kangayam road.

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### **Training at TNAU to set up agri-business centres**

Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will conduct a two-month training programme starting March for those aspiring to establish agri-clinics and agri-business centres.

**Free**

It will be offered free of cost and will include free boarding and lodging.

According to a university release, the training will cover subjects on entrepreneurial development, communication skills, project preparation, project management, agri-business management, basic computer skills, Agriculture Acts, Orders, contracts,

licensing and farm management. It will also include field visits.

On successful completion, a certificate will be issued. This can be utilised to approach banks to get start-up loans up to Rs. 10 lakh for viable projects.

Unemployed graduates or diploma holders who have passed from any agricultural or veterinary university are eligible to apply.

They should send in their bio-data with a copy of their degree or diploma certificate before February 19.

The application should be sent to Head, Department of Agricultural and Rural Management, Centre for Agricultural and Rural Development Studies, TNAU, Coimbatore – 641003.

For details, contact 0422-6611459; or e-mail to [management@tnau.ac.in](mailto:management@tnau.ac.in).

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### **Water level**

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 111.70 feet (full level 136 feet) with nil inflow and a discharge of 300 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 38.45 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 286 cusecs and a discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 894 mcft.

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### **“Organic farming is the way forward”**

Staff Reporter

NAGAPATTINAM: Organic farming is the way forward to battle the nature-induced and human-made vagaries of the tail-end of the Delta. This was reiterated at a one-day seminar on organic farming organised jointly by the Department of Agriculture and Krishi Vigyan Kendra at its premises here at Sikkal recently.

Speaking on the occasion, Collector C.Munianathan stated that the tail-end terrain with its clayey soil was rendered devoid of nutrient-induced fertility due to erosion of soil nutrients caused by run-off water and excessive use of chemical fertilizers. Use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers has also rendered fragile environmental and nutritional safety. Therefore, focus should be on re-nourishing and restructuring of soil and its character.

Addition of green manure and leaf manure would provide the required soil

nourishment. Leaf manure includes Poovarasam, Neem, Nochi, Pungan and most other available leaves could be used during the preparation of the fields to enrich its fertility. Similarly, green manure such as Daintha, Sunhump, and Susdenia should be used along with biofertilizers like rizobium, azobacter, asola, blue-green algae, all of which are available with agricultural depots.

Camps are proposed to be conducted at various locations to spread the message and importance of organic farming, said R.V.Karunakaran, Joint Director of Agriculture. According to Ambalavanan, Chairperson, Agricultural Marketing Committee, crop-friendly worms should be encouraged. Excessive use of pesticides and chemicals would cause greater damage to other organisms that provide nourishment to the soil.

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### **Call for sharing of responsibilities to ensure higher productivity**

Special Correspondent

*National Productivity Week celebrations inaugurated in city*

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*Indians urged to set up science-oriented institutions for research and development*

*These organisations should help sort out various problems of industrial activities*

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SALEM: "Productivity-oriented growth can be achieved only through Research & Development (R and D) activities jointly with the upgradation of technology and minimization of the wastage of raw material," said Chandrasekhar Ta, General Manager, Burn Standard Company Limited.

Inaugurating the week-long National Productivity Week celebrations organized by Salem Productivity Council at the Sona College of Technology premises here, Mr. Ta emphasized that sharing of collective responsibilities by technologists, administrators, accountants, and human resource persons should certainly bring more output and lay the foundation for higher productivity.

He said that during the last eight years, Japan got eight Noble prizes and scientists from China and South Korea presented the maximum number of papers on science and technology.

"There is need for Indians to establish initiatives to set up science-oriented institutions exclusively for R&D to sort out various problems of industrial activities," he said.

After the attraction of IT-oriented education, the number of persons joining

science-oriented courses had subsequently come down and in the recent past it was found that Ph.D and PG degree course persons were not sufficiently passing out from the institutions.

The recent development of magnesium milk out of magnesite, which was made as an ingredient to produce cattle feed was increasing the productivity of more quality milk.

Similarly in Salem and Erode districts the use of dedicated coconut powder manufacturing units were having a mushroom growth since the calorific value for this product was 4,000 kilo calories per kg whereas the same for the most-used furnace oil was only ranging from 1,300 to 1,500 kilo calories per kg.

Here the production cost was also reduced to the extent of 25 to 30 per cent when one used coconut powder.

“China is topping the marketing of mineral based products with recovery registering 90 per cent whereas in India the recovery is not exceeding 10 per cent,” he added.

Hence the Government should come forward to minimize the wastage of any raw materials and by applying modern technology upgradation can only improve and increase the productivity.

By higher productivity the cost of production can be brought down, more employment can be generated and the phenomenon of productivity for inclusive growth is the need of the hour for everyone for national growth.

Salem Productivity Council President K. Mariappan presided over the function.

S. Kuppusami detailed the one week programme.

K. Eswaran, treasurer explained the activities of the Council. PL. Subbiah, Secretary proposed a vote of thanks. The week observances would conclude on February 18. After the inaugural function, a free one-day training programme for the benefit of employees was conducted on February 12.

A special seminar on “Energy Audit and Energy Saving Potential” for the benefit of Micro and Small units to reduce the electricity bill, would be conducted.

Pankaj Gowtam, Executive Director, Salem Steel Plant will be the chief guest for the valedictory function on February 18.

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## New fertilizer consignment arrives

Special Correspondent

10-kg bag to cost Rs. 780

— Photo: R.M. Rajarathinam



**UNLOADING:** Fertilizer bags being unloaded from a goods wagon at the yard in Tiruchi on Saturday.

TIRUCHI: The Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) has introduced in the market a new water soluble fertilizer, NPK 19:19:19, for fertigation and precision farming.

A consignment of about seven tonnes of the fertilizer arrived here from IFFCO's Kandla plant on Saturday. The fertilizer is being marketed for the first time in Tiruchi district and would be sold through the cooperative societies in 10 kg bags at Rs.780 a bag, B.Krishnan, Chief Area Manager, IFFCO, Tiruchi, told *The Hindu* on Saturday.

The fertilizer is highly suitable for sugarcane, banana, coconut and horticulture crops. Farmers adopting drip irrigation and precision farming techniques could use it for better results, he said.

The solid nutrients of the fertilizer are fully soluble without leaving any insoluble residue. The fertilizer has nitrogen in nitrate form and entire nitrogen would be absorbed by the plants, leaving no scope for leaching losses.

Better absorption and lesser losses also help in reducing the fertilizer quantity needed.

The fertilizer is also suited for alkaline and saline soils.

IFFCO has already brought out Urea Phosphate 17:44:0 NPK, a 100 per cent water soluble fertilizer produced indigenously at the Kandla plant. The fertilizer has been



supplied to farmers on trial basis.

Mr.Krishnan also disclosed that about 2,640 tonnes of NPK 10:26:26 complex fertilizer has also arrived here for distribution in Tiruchi and neighbouring districts.

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### **Water-soluble fertilizer introduced in market**

Special Correspondent

*Consignment of seven tonnes arrives from IFFCO plant*

—Photo: R.M. Rajarathinam



***suitable for saline soils: Fertilizer bags being unloaded from a goods wagon at the yard in Tiruchi on Saturday.***

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### **Drip irrigation**

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The solid nutrients of the fertilizer are fully soluble without leaving any insoluble residue. The fertilizer has nitrogen in nitrate form and entire nitrogen would be absorbed by the plants leaving no scope for leaching losses. Better absorption and lesser losses also help in reducing the fertilizer quantity needed. The fertilizer is also suited for alkaline and saline soils. IFFCO has already brought out urea

phosphate 17:44:0 NPK, a 100 per cent water soluble fertilizer produced indigenously at the Kandla plant. The fertilizer has been supplied to farmers on trial basis. Mr. Krishnan also disclosed that about 2,640 tonnes of NPK 10:26:26 complex fertilizer has also arrived here for distribution in Tiruchi and neighbouring districts.

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### **Satisfactory growth defying odds**

*The strong economic growth may prompt the centre and the RBI to plan for a calibrated exit from the stimulus packages*

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*The advance estimate of a 7.2 per cent GDP growth has given rise to optimism. While it has fallen short of some official estimates, an above 7 per cent rate is impressive enough in the current context of a sluggish recovery in the global economy.*

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— PHOTO: K. K. Mustafah



***BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY: Mechanisation in transplanting under way in a paddy field in Kerala. Farmers adopt modern techniques to increase productivity.***

The Central Statistical Organisation has forecast a GDP growth of 7.2 per cent in the current year (2009-10). The 'advance estimate' was released on February 8 and is the first stage in a long drawn out four stage process of officially estimating GDP and other national income data in the country.

Four sets of GDP figures are issued: advance estimate, updated advance estimate,

quick estimate and revised estimate.

In the past, there have been many occasions when the initial estimates were revised upwards. This time too, there is an expectation that the final growth rate for 2009-10 will be higher than the advance estimate. Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee has claimed as much.

How much higher, of course, is a matter of conjecture but it is important to place the projected growth rate for the year (7.2 per cent) in its proper perspective.

It is higher than the 6.7 per cent for last year but below a few other official estimates for the current year.

### Strong fourth quarter?

The Reserve Bank of India in its recent third quarter review of the credit policy had estimated a growth rate of 7.5 per cent, sharply higher than its own earlier forecast of 6 per cent with an upward bias. Earlier, the Mid-Year Economic Survey — a document of the Finance Ministry — had forecast a 7.75 per cent growth. The economy grew by 7 per cent during the first six months of the year mainly due to a spectacular 7.9 per cent increase in the second quarter. The third quarter data, not yet released, will reflect the impact of the agricultural slowdown.

So the betting is on a strong showing in the fourth quarter. In estimating a growth rate of 7.2 per cent for the year, the authorities are banking on a bountiful rabi harvest to substantially offset the fall in kharif production. A growth rate of 7.2 per cent, though above last year's rate, will be below the 9 per cent plus growth recorded in each of the three years beginning 2005-06 and ending 2007-08. The economy grew by 9.5, 9.7 and 9.2 per cent, respectively, or at an average of nearly 9.5 per cent.

The sharp drop in 2008-09 to 6.7 per cent has to be understood in the context of the global economic crisis.

All countries witnessed sharply lower growths: many, including all the developed ones, even posted negative rates. India along with China is among the few which posted positive growth rates and, as subsequent years showed, maintained the positive trend.

The achievement of a 7.2 per cent growth rate would be particularly commendable at a time the global economy is climbing out of a deep recession. Among the domestic factors, the economy has weathered one of the worst droughts in recent times.

Besides, delayed monsoons and floods in different parts of the country have left their mark on the farm sector.

In the event, the projected agricultural growth at a minus 0.2 per cent, though well below last year's 1.6 per cent, is better than feared. The implication is agricultural

performance will not drag down the overall growth rates.

The marginal contraction in agriculture is estimated to come on top of a fall in the production of foodgrains and oilseeds by 8 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively, as compared to last year. That, of course, is one of the main factors behind the current spike in food inflation.

### Manufacturing on top

Economic growth during the year will be led by the strong performance of manufacturing which is expected to grow by 8.9 per cent, sharply higher than the 3.2 per cent in 2008-09. Evidently, the negative factors — steep fall in domestic and global demand, high cost of raw materials — have not dragged down manufacturing and the other two sub-sectors under the broad classification of industry. Mining and quarrying is expected to post 8.7 per cent growth (1.6 per cent last year) while electricity, gas and water supply is likely to grow by 8.2 per cent as compared to 3.9 per cent a year ago.

The services sector is expected to grow at a slower pace than the 9.8 per cent it clocked last year. Compared to last year, when it grew by nearly 14 per cent, the segment, “community, social and personal services” is estimated to grow at a slower but still impressive 8.2 per cent. Clearly the implementation of the Pay Commission award and other stimulus measures that had buoyed this segment earlier will have less impact this time. The strong economic growth may prompt the government and the RBI to plan for a calibrated and coordinated exit from the stimulus packages.

C. R. L. NARASIMHAN

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

## UN climate panel admits Dutch sea level flaw

AFP, 15 February 2010, 06:00am IST

GENEVA: The UN climate change panel admitted on Sunday to having imprecisely stated in a key report that 55 per cent of The Netherlands is under sea level, saying that is only the area at risk of flooding.

The Dutch government this month asked the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to explain the figure, used in a landmark 2007 report, saying its numbers were that only 26 percent of the country is below sea level.

It was a new embarrassment for the panel. The same 938-page Fourth Assessment Report also contained an erroneous claim that global warming could melt Himalayan glaciers by 2035.

The IPCC admitted in a note sent to AFP on Sunday that the 55 per cent figure was actually the portion of The Netherlands "at risk of being flooded". It insisted that the imprecision did not affect the conclusions of the report.

The figure had been used in various publications to mean "either the area below the highest sea-level reached during storms, or the total area of the country that is prone to flooding from the sea and rivers," the note said.

"Therefore, a preliminary analysis suggests that the sentence discussed should end with: 'because 55 per cent of The Netherlands is at risk of flooding'."

The panel said the figure had been supplied by a Dutch government agency.

Dutch environment ministry spokesman Trimo Vallaart told AFP on February 5 that the figure used by the IPCC included the area below sea level - 26 per cent - and the area threatened by river flooding - 29 per cent.

The error about Himalayan glaciers - which is being withdrawn - spurred fierce criticism of the IPCC with the controversy has giving fresh ammunition to climate sceptics.

## **Beat the bulge with soya sausage**

ANI, 15 February 2010, 12:00am IST

*Researchers at the Rowett Institute, Aberdeen have come up with a healthy alternative for dieters who can't get enough of fried sausage and bacon, and giant plates of steak –soya sausage.*

Besides being sumptuous, the revolutionary food item makes a person feel full.

Scientists have found that if people eat high-protein foods then they do not get as hungry.

The exact reason is not known, but it is thought a protein triggers particular signals from the gut to the [brain](#) that it is full.

The weight lost on a high-protein diet is fat instead of muscle or water.

Dr Alex Johnstone, from the Rowett's Metabolic Health Group, is conducting studies to see if vegetable-based proteins such as soya work as well as dairy and meat.

If successful it could result in a high-protein weight loss plan diet that is healthier and more environmentally-friendly.

The study subjects are currently on a diet made up of around 30 per cent protein.

The diet is not low carb, but contains moderate amounts of carbohydrate at each meal such as rice, bread or pasta as well as meat and dairy substitutes such as soya meatballs or bacon and soya milk, margarine, bread and yoghurts.

For two weeks they ate meat and for a further two a vegetarian diet. So far they have lost up to a stone each in a month.

"One of the main reasons why people fail to lose weight is because of hunger, so how can we design diets in order to achieve that," the Scotsman quoted Johnstone as saying.

"High-protein diets don't have to be low in carbs. I am looking at whether you can have the same control of [appetite](#) from vegetarian sources as from meat, which would be good for health. I want to find out if you can get the same modification of appetite from a vegetarian source as from a meat source.

"We ask them how hungry they feel every waking hour. They come in and get their breakfast made for them and scoot away with a packed lunch and dinner. They have really enjoyed the study and as traditional Scottish meat-eating men were quite surprised that the vegetarian diets were extremely palatable and some will go on to make a conscious choice to make changes in their own diet," Johnstone added.



By IANS

14 Feb 2010 10:01:10 PM IST

### **Sugarcane pricing: DMK, AIADMK on warpath**

CHENNAI: Continuing their war of words on the issue of a remunerative price for sugarcane growers in the state, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi Sunday hit out at AIADMK leader J.Jayalithaa and her party's agitation over the issue.

"The AIADMK government (2001-2005) for four years did not announce a higher price than what the central government had announced for sugarcane purchase. It was only in 2005 with an eye to the elections that the Jayalithaa government announced higher price for the cane (Rs.1,014 per tonne as against the central government's price of Rs.795 per tonne)," he said.

"However, the AIADMK government did not pay that amount and it was only the DMK government that assumed power in 2006 that paid that rate to the cane growers," Karunanidhi added.

Jayalithaa, addressing a gathering of agitating cane growers at Villupuram Saturday, said the AIADMK government had announced a price of Rs.1,014 per tonne in 2005 as against the central government's price of Rs.795 per tonne.

According to Karunanidhi, the AIADMK government paid the cane price three months after the central government announced its rate.

He said it was the DMK government that announced payment of sugarcane freight charges at Rs.90 per tonne irrespective of the distance and the ownership of the sugar mill - government-run, or owned by a cooperative or private firm.

Karunanidhi also refuted Jayalalithaa's charge that the DMK government has reduced the cane price by Rs.80 per tonne the last four years even as the central government had increased the rate by Rs.503 per ton.

He said the state government has announced a price of Rs.1,437.40 per tonne for 2009-2010 as against the central government notified price of Rs.1,298.40 per tonne.

## **Jaya wants cane price hiked**

VILLUPURAM: Amidst exodus of its MLAs and recent defeats in the byelections, the AIADMK showed its strength on Saturday with thousands of party cadre participating in the demonstration organised to demand higher procurement price for sugarcane.

Hitting out at the DMK government for being "anti-farmer", party chief J Jayalalithaa said its rule would soon be brought to an end.

"It is the duty of the State government to fix the advisory price and protect the farmers, but it has failed in doing the same," she said.

She noted that during her previous rule, the government procured sugarcane at Rs 1,014 per tonne when sugar was sold at Rs 1,250 per quintal in the market. "Now sugar is sold at Rs 4,000 per quintal, but the government is procuring sugarcane only at Rs 1,437 per tonne," she said. She demanded it to be raised to Rs 2,500.

She said several northern States were offering higher procurement price for sugar, but the Tamil Nadu government has reduced its share of the support price from Rs 219 to Rs 139 during the past four years.

In 2005-06, the sugar production in the State was 21.38 lakh metric tonne, but it has dropped to 16.16 lakh metric tonne in 2008-09.

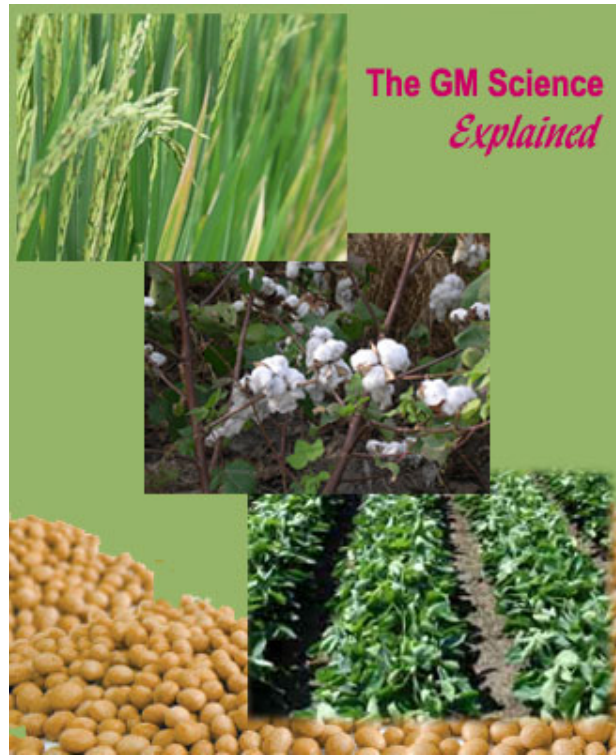
"The government's low procurement price has made it difficult for the farmers to cultivate sugar and this has resulted in skyrocketing of the sugar price in the market which is affecting the public," she added.

Meanwhile, some squabble broke out between DMK and AIADMK cadre. Quick intervention of police prevented any untoward incident.

The DMK cadre allegedly distributed pamphlets against Jayalalithaa to which the AIADMK cadre objected.

## The Bt Debate

What is a GM crop?



As the name suggests, a genetically modified crop is produced by bringing about a change in the genetic structure of the plant. It is generally done by introducing an outside gene, sourced from other plants or organisms, to develop some special characteristic in the crop. In conventional hybridisation, two or more varieties of the same crop are cross-bred, through cross-pollination or some other method, to develop a hybrid variety with some desired characteristic. Bt crops are genetically-modified after inserting a particular gene (Cry1Ac) from the soil bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt), into a plant cell. *Bacillus thuringiensis* is a naturally occurring bacteria that produces a toxin poisonous to certain types of insects.

### **Bt Brinjal in deep freeze**

Citing a lack of scientific consensus and the absence of any “over-riding urgency”, the govt of India put an indefinite moratorium on the introduction of a genetically-modified brinjal developed after ten years of research. Govt questioned the logic of letting private companies drive biotechnology research in agriculture. The brinjal in question has been developed by Mahyco — a private firm in which global seed major Monsanto holds a 26% stake — in collaboration with two Indian agricultural universities.



## **Bt cotton experience**

Bt cotton was the first GM crop approved by the govt for commercial cultivation in India. From the initial three varieties of Bt cotton developed in 2002, farmers in the country now have more than 200 Bt cotton hybrids to choose from. Since the introduction of Bt cotton, the average productivity of cotton has risen from 191 kg per hectare in 2002-03 to an average of 466 kg per hectare in 2007-08 with Gujarat showing a productivity of 625 kg per hectare. Almost 80 per cent of the cotton area is now under Bt cotton. India has already overtaken the US as the second largest producer of cotton in the world, next only to China.

## **Where the world stands...**

Argentina, the US and Canada produce 90% of the world's transgenic crops. Japan, Australia & New Zealand have introduced mandatory labelling for all food containing genetically modified organisms. US: GE crops adopted widely since their introduction in 1996; genetically engineered soybeans and cotton most widely used, followed by cotton and corn. Europe: Virtually no market for GM food in Europe; requires labelling of all foodstuff containing 1 pct or more GM material. China: Granted safety certificates to two strains of GM rice and one of GM maize for field trials. Latin America: GM soybean is grown widely with Brazil and Argentina being the main producers; GM corn also widely cultivated. Australia: Has approved GM cotton, carnations and canola for commercial cultivation; GM soy, cotton & corn imported and are approved for consumption.

## **Are GM foods safe?**

Different GM organisms include different genes inserted in different ways. This means that individual GM foods and their safety should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and that it is not possible to make general statements on the safety of all GM foods. GM foods currently available on the international market have passed risk assessments and are not likely to present risks for human health. In addition, no effects on human health have been shown as a result of the consumption of such foods by the general population in the countries where they have been approved.

**UN panel admits new error in key climate report**

The UN climate change panel has admitted to having imprecisely stated in a key report that 55 per cent of The Netherlands is under sea level, saying that is only the area at risk of flooding.

The Dutch government this month asked the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to explain the figure, used in a landmark 2007 report, saying its numbers were that only 26 per cent of the country is below sea level.

It was a new embarrassment for the panel. The same 938-page Fourth Assessment Report also contained an erroneous claim that global warming could melt Himalayan glaciers by 2035.

The IPCC admitted in a note sent to AFP on Sunday that the 55 per cent figure was actually the portion of The Netherlands "at risk of being flooded". It insisted that the imprecision did not affect the conclusions of the report.

The figure had been used in various publications to mean "either the area below the highest sea-level reached during storms, or the total area of the country that is prone to flooding from the sea and rivers," the note said.

"Therefore, a preliminary analysis suggests that the sentence discussed should end with: 'because 55 per cent of The Netherlands is at risk of flooding!'"

The panel said the figure had been supplied by a Dutch government agency.

Dutch environment ministry spokesman Trimo Vallaart told AFP on February 5 that the figure used by the IPCC included the area below sea level -- 26 per cent -- and the area threatened by river flooding -- 29 per cent.