

THE HINDU

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Farmers observe fast demanding funds to repair group houses

ERODE: Members of Tamil Nadu Agricultural Labourers Association observed a fast here on Monday urging the State government to allot funds for carrying out repair and maintenance works in the group houses given to the farm labourers.

The members pointed out that a majority of the group houses provided by the government needed immediate repairs. They also wanted the government to extend benefits of Kalaingar housing scheme for all the eligible persons living below poverty line in urban areas.

The government should ensure quality during the construction of houses under the scheme, they stressed.

Meanwhile, members of the Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam blocked the traffic in different parts of the district urging the State government to provide free house site pattas to all the eligible families.

The government should take steps to provide two acre free lands to all eligible farm labourers. Police arrested over 640 members in various parts of the district.

Fatal knock

A motorcyclist was killed when a State Transport Corporation bus hit his vehicle in Gobichettipalayam recently. The police said the deceased was identified as Selvaraj (30) of Pichandampalayam village. He was on his way to work, when the accident took place. He died on the spot. A case was registered.

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Training in confectionery products at TNAU

COIMBATORE: The Tamil Nadu Agricultural University will organise a training in preparing chocolate and confectionery products on March 9 and 10 at the university premises.

According to a university release, the training will cover the following: chocolate, fruit candy, chikkies, lollipop, jujups, fondant, fudge, toffee, caramel, marzipan and marshmallows.

Aim

It is aimed at those seeking avenues for self-employment.

Those interested can attend by paying a fee of Rs. 1,000.

For details, contact Head, Post Harvest Technology Centre, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore – 641003.

For details and registration, contact 0422-6611340 / 6611268 before March 9.

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Budget and farmers

The article “And yet another pro-farmer budget” (March 1) exposes how farmers are fooled by successive governments. The annual budget doles out huge concessions to the corporate sector year after year. Media experts, as the article points out, peddle the interests of corporates and pay little attention to the actual sufferers.

As soon as it is known that corporates have gained over the public sector, the market buoys and the sensitive index gains. Even though everybody agrees that a strong public sector saved India from the adverse impact of recession, we tread the beaten path of selling the public sector for a song. This year's disinvestment target is Rs. 40,000 crore. We have to wait and see which industries are going to be offered to the private sector on a platter.

M.S.R.A. Srihari,Khammam

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Year after year, our Finance Ministers cater to the wish-list of people who matter in the agricultural sector, industry, banking or infrastructure. The real agriculturist is neither the owner of vast farm lands nor the producer of fertilizers or farm equipment. He is one who tills the soil and whose voice is ever unheard. When will a budget cater to his needs?

Sunil P. Shenoy,Mangalore

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Gone are the days when agriculture was an honourable service — of feeding the people. Today it is agri-business, in which investments are huge. P. Sainath is quite right in saying that you can get fresh produce much cheaper from the petty vendor on the street. Unlike the corporates, the “middleman” who commits suicide, thanks to the government's policies, is not the aam aadmi the government is looking to for support. I have never been

able to make sense of the media's commentary on the budget. Even after listening to the Finance Minister's speech and the media experts, we find that we are smoke-screened from the reality.

S. Krishnan,Chennai

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Mr. Sainath's in-depth analysis of the budget proposals demolishes in one stroke the government's claim that it is building castles for farmers. Thanks to the continued stranglehold of corporate India, even subsidies and credit facilities intended for farmers are usurped by it. The cosmetic robustness slated for the farm sector exposes the bloated underbelly of India Inc. Until we face a serious food security crisis, we are unlikely to learn any lesson.

Chandran Dharmalingam,The Nilgiris

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There is no doubt that the country is being systematically robbed by corporates. The aam aadmi is the worst hit. We can even rescue the victims of bomb blasts but there is no one to rescue our farmers who are suffering in silence. The words "Budget time is when the Big media are seen for what they are: stenographers to the powerful" will ring in my ears for a long time to come.

B.R. Kumar,Chennai

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The article has brought to light how the budget favours corporate farmers and agri-business, leaving millions of small and marginal farmers high and dry. The media lobby for the corporates to ensure their survival in these days of cut-throat competition.

S. Sridharan,Coimbatore

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The small and marginal farmers have no wherewithal to start any corporate venture for farming activities. The corporate sector has to play the role of a facilitator by collecting the farm produce and selling it over a period based on budget proposals, by which the farmers will be benefited. It is like a sugar mill operating with the cane grown by farmers.

We have milk co-operatives for collecting and selling milk and they have been successful in many places. Likewise, we need cold storage facilities at every district headquarters so that perishable items can be stored instead of being sold for throwaway prices. Farmers do not have lobbies like corporates. Till we develop an alternative system along the co-operative model, the government can only be an enabler. It cannot deliver anything to the farmers directly.S. Balasubramanian,Chennai

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Seminar on global warming

A seminar on global warming and its ill effects on earth was conducted at Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Sholavandan, by Power Project. Dhanraj, an advocate, spoke on the need to adopt environment-friendly technologies. P. Manickamoorthy, Director, Power Project, inaugurated the seminar. Tree saplings were distributed to students on the occasion, according to a press release.

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Water level

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Monday stood at 109.60 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 9 cusecs and a discharge of 175 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 37.50 feet (71 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 60 cusecs.

The combined Periyar credit stood at 524 mcft.

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Mettur level

TIRUCHI: The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 74.70 feet against its full level of 120 feet on Monday. The inflow was 1,540 cusecs and the discharge 1,600 cusecs.