

Slew of measures for differently abled

A department for them under the direct supervision of Chief Minister



Tamil Nadu Finance Minister K. Anbazhagan presents the budget for 2010-11 in the Assembly in Chennai on Friday. He is flanked by Chief Minister Karunanidhi and Deputy Chief Minister M.K. Stalin (left).

CHENNAI: The tax-free State budget 2010-2011, presented by Finance Minister K. Anbazhagan in the recently inaugurated Assembly-Secretariat complex on Friday, contained a slew of policy measures for the differently abled.

Apart from announcing the creation of a department under the “direct supervision” of the Chief Minister, Mr. Anbazhagan conveyed the State government’s appeal to the Union government to amend the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 in consonance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

“This government would take all necessary steps for enabling the differently abled persons to lead their lives getting their due share in all livelihood rights such as education, health facilities, employment and with equal rights and opportunities in the society, in accordance with this Convention,” he said, pointing out that India was seventh among the countries that had adopted and signed the Convention.

When Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi entered the Assembly Hall, he was greeted by thumping of desks by members of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Congress. Even as the Finance Minister rose to present the budget, members of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam who came to the House in black attire staged a walkout, shouting slogans against the government.

Mr. Anbazhagan said the income ceiling prescribed for the differently abled availing assistance under various welfare schemes of the government would be removed. After having exempted such persons from payment of tuition fee, the government would exempt them from payment of special fees in the coming academic year.

A monthly assistance of Rs.200 towards food to students staying in homes for the differently abled run by the Government and voluntary organisations would be enhanced to Rs.450 . The Minister said expenditure on the welfare of differently abled was fixed at Rs. 176 crore in the coming financial year as against Rs.49 crore in 2005-2006.

Mullaperiyar issue

Referring to the Supreme Court order in February constituting the Empowered Committee on the Mullaperiyar dam dispute, Mr. Anbazhagan said the order required to be recalled.

On the issue of State autonomy, the Finance Minister wanted the Union government to drop the proposed move to centralise all the powers relating to higher education by establishing a unitary body – National Commission for Higher Education and Research. The Centre was also requested to formulate schemes after consulting State governments, he said.

Women's education

Referring to the Union government's announcement of the scheme — “Saakshar Bharat” — in districts where literacy rate among women was less than 50 per cent, the Minister said the Rs. 68-crore scheme would be implemented in Villupuram, Perambalur, Salem and Erode. It would be executed by the Union and State governments.

The Anna University of Technology would be established in Madurai. Tiruvannamalai would have a medical college in the coming financial year.

He announced that the amount given under the Moovalur Ramamirtham Ammaiyar Memorial Marriage assistance scheme for poor women would go up from the present Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 25,000.

One thousand and two hundred Adi Dravidar students pursuing engineering courses would be given training in software and spoken English through finishing schools. This year's allocation for Scheduled Castes Sub-Plan would be Rs. 3,828 crore, representing 19 per cent of the total plan outlay.

Devolution of funds to local bodies from the State's Own Tax Revenue would be increased from the present 9.5 per cent to 10 per cent in 2010-11. Village panchayats that did not have a community hall or a marriage hall would be provided with the facility, utilising grants of the 13 {+t} {+h} Finance Commission.

Tax concessions

Announcing tax concessions, the Minister said exemption from the Value Added Tax would be given for imported sugar for one year to contain the open market price. Aloe vera products [in the event of aggregate annual turnover not exceeding Rs. 1 crore], plates and cups made of areca palm leaf and powders made of pepper, cumin seed and aniseed were among those which had been exempted. The reduction in the tax rate from 12.5 per cent to four per cent would cover commodities such as branded coffee powder (other than instant coffee), paint brush, branded sweets and savouries and branded ready mix food products.

A scheme for settlement of arrears under the Tamil Nadu General Sales Tax Act and Central Sales Tax Act would be introduced in the current session of the Assembly, he added.

Date:20/03/2010 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/20/stories/2010032055180600.htm>

New technology for growing marine ornamental fishes

They have high value in commercial market worldwide



PROFITABLE:Ornamental fishes produced at Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute at Mandapam.

RAMANATHAPURAM: The Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, CMFRI, Mandapam has developed a new technology for growing marine ornamental fishes, which have high value in commercial market world wide.

G. Gopa Kumar, Scientist-In-Charge, CMFRI, told The Hindu that brood stock development, larval rearing and growing in marine environment were part of the technology. The experimental study carried out by the CMFRI during the past few years had showed that the process of producing juvenile marine fishes could be completed within 2 months. After developing brood stocks, live feed mechanism would be followed to feed larvae. Micro algae and micro organisms would be fed to the ornamental fishes in the larval stage. After a few weeks they would be transferred to small size cages established in the sea. Once they become adults, the fishes could be sold to the buyers. Mr. Kumar said it had developed the technology for growing 12 ornamental clown and damsel fishes such as perpula, maroon clown, sapphire damsel, blue damsel, striped damsel, peacock damsel, yellow tail damsel.

The marine ornamental fishes, the fascinating creatures of aquatic environment, could fetch huge profit to the entrepreneurs as they had a great demand world over.

It would ensure protection of coral reef, which were being destroyed in the process of collecting ornamental marine fishes, which were always associated with coral reefs. The CMFRI would provide technical assistance to the fishermen and entrepreneurs to grow marine ornamental fishes.

Date:20/03/2010 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/20/stories/2010032065180700.htm>

Sugarcane procurement price to go up to Rs.2,000

CHENNAI: The State government has decided to increase the procurement price of sugarcane to Rs.2,000 a tonne from crushing season 2010-11. The price includes transportation charges and recovery-based incentive.

For the current season, the government decided to pay Rs.100 more per tonne. Accordingly, cane farmers will be paid Rs.1,650 instead of Rs.1,550 per tonne.

Announcing this in his budget speech, Finance Minister K. Anbazhagan said the government had been consistently increasing the procurement price from 2006-07. The price was Rs.1,025 per tonne in 2006-07, Rs.1,034 in 2007-08, Rs.1,100 in 2008-09 and Rs.1,550 in the current season, which has been increased by Rs.100 per tonne.

Accepting a longstanding demand of paddy farmers to increase procurement price of paddy to Rs.1,000 a quintal, the government had enhanced the price for common variety to Rs.1,050 and fine variety to Rs.1,100 by giving additional incentive over and above the price fixed by the Centre. Rs.200 crore had been allocated for providing incentive to paddy farmers.

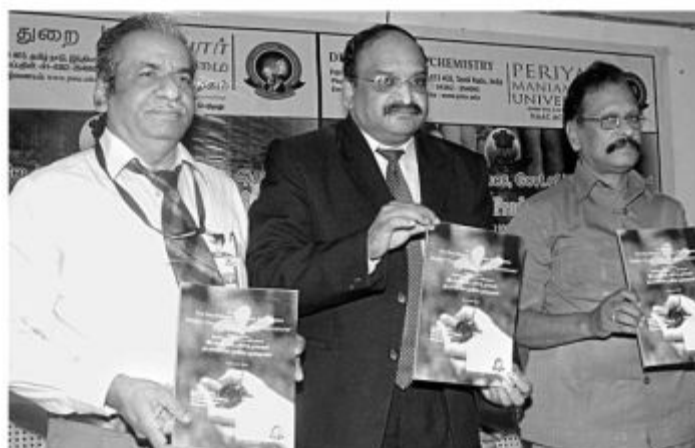
In the coming financial year, the government had fixed a target of Rs.2,500 crore for crop loan as against Rs.2,013 crore disbursed during the current financial year.

Allocation for food subsidy would be reduced in the coming financial year.

Date:20/03/2010 **URL:** <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/20/stories/2010032053570300.htm>

Vast scope for biomanure production: Periyar VC

University is selling biomanure at a premium



POSSIBILITIES: Periyar Maniammai University Vice-Chancellor N.Ramachandran (second from left) and Joint Director of Agriculture,

THANJAVUR: "There is a lot of scope for production and sale of biomanures by farmers," said Periyar Maniammai University Vice-Chancellor N.Ramachandran here on Friday.

Speaking at a national workshop on modern trends in the production of biomanure at the University, Mr. Ramachandran said that the requirement was 40,000 tonnes of biomanure per year for the State. But only 4,000 tonnes were produced every year.

Out of this, the University alone produced 350 tonnes of biomanure per year. "We are selling the biomanure at a premium," said Ramachandran.

Farmers should take to organic farming in view of climate change and environment degradation. Chemical fertilisers should not be used.

Periyar Maniammai University has been organising agri-conferences every year to educate farmers on modern trends in agriculture. Nearly 8,000 farmers benefitted out of it. Periyar Technology Incubator is functioning at the University in which farmers can invent new technologies are products and market them.

The Vice-Chancellor released a souvenir on the occasion. P. Loganathan, Joint Director of Agriculture, Thanjavur district, received the first copy. Mr. Loganathan said that farmers should utilise the technology suggested by agriculture experts for increasing the yield.

Normally farmers are reluctant to use the new technology. It happened in the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method of paddy cultivation. Only a young farmer came forward to try it in a village

near Musiri in Tiruchi district. After finding that he reaped a good yield, many farmers came forward to use it. Now it has become popular and many farmers are using the method.

Chemistry Professor V.A.Elavalagan welcomed the gathering. J. Swaminathan, Assistant Professor, proposed a vote of thanks.

Date:20/03/2010 URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/2010/03/20/stories/2010032052010300.htm>

Farm equipment given away



BOON:Collector M. Jayaraman handing over the key of a harvester to a farmer in Tirunelveli on Friday.

TIRUNELVELI: District Collector M. Jayaraman handed over Rs. 58.29-lakh farm equipment, including subsidy of Rs. 12.15 lakh, to the beneficiaries during the farmers' grievance day meeting held at the Collectorate on Friday.

In order to mechanise agriculture, the government has allotted Rs. 29.45 lakh (as subsidy) to the district to distribute 66 machinery under Agricultural Mechanization Programme (macro management mode) during the current fiscal and Rs. 58.77 lakh for the distribution of 131 farm equipment.

A budget with an eye on next year's elections

First Published : 20 Mar 2010 06:03:00 AM IST

Last Updated : 20 Mar 2010 08:55:01 AM IST

CHENNAI: Agriculture and allied sectors received a big boost in the State budget for 2010-11 with announcements like substantial hike in the procurement price of sugarcane and increase in the target for crop loans, formation of 10,000 self-help groups for farmers, desilting of irrigation canals in the Cauvery delta region and new flood protection works to the tune of Rs 609 crore.

Presenting the budget in the State Assembly, Finance Minister K Anbazhagan said the procurement price for sugarcane would be hiked from Rs 1,650 per tonne to Rs 2,000 per tonne inclusive of transport charges and recovery based incentive for the coming crushing season.

Sugarcane farmers have been demanding a hike in the sugarcane price for a long time and recently, AIADMK general secretary J Jayalalithaa led a demonstration at Villupuram demanding Rs 2,500 per tonne as procurement price.

The system of rice intensification under which 15 lakh acres have already been brought would be extended to 6.25 lakh acres in the coming financial year. Similarly, precision farming method would be extended to 35,000 acres in the coming financial year.

Anbazhagan said in addition to the 20,000 self-help groups functioning for the farmers, 10,000 more would be formed in the coming year giving priority for small and marginal farmers producing horticulture crops like vegetables, flowers, fruits and coconuts.

New flood protection works to the tune of Rs 609 crore, which include Coleroon Flood Protection Project beneficial to Thanjavur, Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts at an estimated cost of Rs 376 crore, Vellar Flood Protection Project in Cuddalore and Villupuram districts at an estimated cost of Rs 164 crore and Pennaiyar Flood Protection Project in Cuddalore district at an estimated cost of Rs 69 crore would be taken up.

Works on desilting irrigation canals in the Cauvery delta region of Thanjavur, Thiruvarur, Nagapattinam and Cuddalore districts would be taken up by the end of March and completed before the end of May this year, the minister said.