

# THE HINDU

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## NAFED has lost crores in coconut procurement

KOCHI: Ever since the Union government declared copra an oilseed in 1984 and fixed a floor price of Rs.1,200 a quintal, the NAFED started coconut procurement, which had incurred huge losses in the name of helping the growers.

According to industry sources, the loss due to procurement would be of the order of a minimum of Rs.200 crore a year . Moreover, the procurement had not been effective either in controlling the ever-fluctuating coconut oil prices or bringing succour to the genuine coconut growers, said N. Ananthan, former secretary of the Cochin Oil Merchants' Association and former CEO of the First Commodities Exchange of India.

Giving details, he said the Union government in January 2009 hiked the minimum support price (MSP) for copra from Rs.3,690 a quintal to Rs.4,450 a quintal. The prevailing price for copra at that time was Rs.3,900.

It is reported that the NAFED has procured around 1.25 lakh tonnes of copra till now. Even after procuring, the open market price does not improve, he pointed out. In February 2010, it marginally improved and touched Rs.3,400 a quintal.

On account of loss in weight due to storage for a long time and godown rent, etc., the total cost of copra would be around Rs.4,800 (that is Rs.4,450 plus Rs.350) a quintal.

It is said that the selling price is around Rs.3,300 a quintal, which is Rs.1,500 less than the cost price. A rough calculation would show that the total loss incurred by the NAFED due to procurement would be around Rs.200 crore.

The government, Mr. Ananthan said, should come out with a statement as to whether domestic consumption of coconut oil had increased or not during the last three years since the withdrawal of the tax.

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## Rs. 37.08 lakh sanctioned as relief for farmers

*Their fields were affected in November 2008 rains*



**DISCUSSION:Collector J. Uma Maheswari (second from right) addressing farmers at the grievances day meet in Karur on Wednesday.**

KARUR: The State Government has sanctioned a relief of Rs. 37.08 lakh as compensation for those farmers whose fields were devastated in the November 2008 rains, according to the Collector J. Uma Maheswari.

Addressing the farmers grievance day meeting here on Wednesday, Dr. Uma Maheswari said that following persistent demands by the farmers that Karur district too had suffered extensive damage during the November 2008 rain and that while the State government was extending relief to the coastal and delta districts affected by those rain, Karur should not be left out, the district administration had forwarded the claims of the farmers and their demands.

Following the State government had positively considered the demands and has included the district in the list of affected areas and has since arranged for compensation for the affected fields.

As per the State government notification received recently, it had been assessed that paddy crop raised over a total of 154.40 hectares had been affected against which a compensation of Rs. 11.58 lakh was being sanctioned. Also, other crops including sugar cane and banana raised on over 637.60 hectares had been affected against which a sum of Rs. 25.50 lakh was being awarded as compensation.

The compensation amount would be credited to the bank accounts of the respective farmers directly, Dr. Maheswari said.

A large number of farmers including Kulithalai Farmers Discussion Group convener A.V. Gopaladesikan, Cauvery Delta Farmers Welfare Association deputy secretary Kavandampatti R. Subramanian, Rajeswari and others besides several officials including District Revenue Officer C. Munirathinam, Karur Sub Collector Hanish Chhabra, Joint Director of Agriculture Jagadeesan, Joint Registrar of Cooperative Societies Uma Maheswari, Lead District Manager K. Chandrasekaran, Assistant Director of Agriculture Kandasamy and others participated in the deliberations.

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## Price of tomato falls, prompts increased buying

*Wholesale merchants attribute the fall to heavy arrivals*



**Encouraging:Tomatoes being sold at low prices sees increased buying by customers at the weekly market in Ramanathapuram.**

RAMANATHAPURAM: The price of tomato has plummeted to an all time low in the market, causing enthusiasm among consumers. According to the market sources, a kg of tomato is sold at Rs.8 to Rs. 10 in the retail market as against the average price of Rs.20 a kg. The price went up to Rs.60 a kilo during the months of October, November and December. Since the start of February, the prices began to fall in the market.

The wholesale merchants attributed the fall of price to more arrival from the tomato growing areas.

“The suppliers send more loads than actual orders. We require 7 to 8 tonnes of tomato for sale in Ramanathapuram and Kilakarai. But we receive 10 tonnes a day. Though the arrival is more we hope that we can sell the entire load due to cheap rate,” says M. Venkatesh, a whole sale merchant.

He said the traders received tomato from Dharmapuri, Pollachi, Bangalore and Madurai and sometimes from Andhra Pradesh also. The price was almost the same in all markets. One kilogram of tomato was sold at Rs.4 to 5 in the markets near the cultivating areas.

Mr. Venkatesh added that due to the cheap price, the buyers bought more than usual. He however said that price would increase gradually from next week.

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## **New technique to make mango trees bear earlier**

The seedlings come to commercial bearing in 2-3 years



**Novel method: A farmer from Thanjavur, Kulandaisamy, is seen grafting a mango seedling in a poly bag.**

“Our farmers are not happy. Economically they are suffering. Their children don't want to continue in agriculture, as it is not remunerative.

In certain parts of western Tamil Nadu, such as Erode you don't even get married if you say you are a farmer. And our policy makers still keep speaking on increasing production and food security without realising the problems at the grassroots," says Mr. R. Kulandaisamy an engineer-turned-farmer.

#### Bio-tech nursery

Mr. Kulandaisamy maintains a nursery called Tari Bio-Tech, on the Orathanad bye-pass road in Thanjavur.

Recalling his foray into agri-related ventures "as an accident," the farmer says he started his career by doing sub-contracting jobs and when the unit failed, he decided to diversify into nursery business.

"And I have not looked back since then," he says.

Mr. Kulandaisamy initially acquired about 25 acres of land for establishing the nursery and later expanded it to 90 acres.

"It is a Government approved 100 per cent organic nursery for cashew. But we also supply vanilla, citrus, guava, sapota, amla (gooseberry), banana, and mango saplings, apart from medicinal and ornamental plants."

The nursery supplies close to 12 lakh plantings annually and home to nearly 50 mango varieties.

The interesting feature about the farmer is that he developed a new technique for growing grafted mango seedlings.

#### New method

Usually the grafted seedlings are planted in the field and grown, but the farmer says, "through this new technique (polybag growing), mango seedlings come to commercial bearing in 2- 3 years."

Giving details about how he does the grafting the farmer says:

"Good, bearing mother plants are selected and the desired variety is grafted together and grown for 45 days in plastic bags in a controlled environment. After the first flush of leaves emerge, the seedlings are moved to open conditions and kept under shade and watered."

"Grafting ensures purity in variety, till date many growers simply plant the grafted seedlings they buy straight into the open field. The investment, maintenance and labour for growing the plants is quite high.

Whereas, in the poly bag method, the plants are grown for 1 to 2 years and then planted in the main field.

"The cost of cultivation drastically comes down. Farmers need to take care of the tree only for 2 to 3 years, after which it comes to bearing and can be harvested," explains Mr. Kulandaisamy.

But what about the regular infestations which affect mango trees?

"I use my own bio plant growth promoters while I plant my grafted seedlings in the poly bags. The plants are regularly sprayed with our own bio growth promoters and grow quite well. So far we have been sending our seedlings to several parts of the country and are receiving encouraging feedbacks," he replies.

Varieties

More than half a dozen mango varieties are being grafted in his farm and grown to be sold.

Even a single tree, if grown by this method and taken care of properly, can yield more than 150 fruits. For an acre about 80 seedlings are required and in a year a farmer can get an income of at least Rs. 1,50,000 (minimum), assures Mr. Kulandaisamy.

"Forget the international market, concentrate on your local market first. When farmers already face problems in marketing and the Government agriculture machinery remains insensitive to their demands and problems, what is the use of asking them to think of exporting to international markets?" he asks.

For more details Mr. R. Kulandaisamy can be reached at email:tari\_hitech@yahoo.com, website:www.tarigroup.com, mobile: 98430-59117 and 98434-39909.

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## **Control of nut weevil menace in mango**

The nut weevil or "stone weevil" of mango is a peculiar pest. The grubs of mango nut weevil burrow through the rind and pulp of tender immature fruits and finally reach the seed coat.

Exit holes

No external injury is seen on the fruit as grubs feed inside the endocarp. Adults make exit holes in the seed while coming out through the pulp rendering the fruits unfit for consumption.

It attacks soft pulped varieties such as Neelum, Bangalora, Alphonso, Mulgoa, Himayuddin, Kalepad, Beneshan, etc. It feeds only on mango seeds and is considered to be the most serious pest of mango.

The adult is a stout greyish brown snout beetle measuring 6-8 mm, camouflaged by the bark of mango trees. They become active during mango season, are nocturnal in habit and feign death when disturbed.

Adult females lay eggs on the skin of the fruits. Within a week the eggs hatch into cylindrical white legless grubs and start tunnelling into the tender fruits. The larva feeds from inside, grows and moults five times measuring 6-9 mm long.

The larval period is about 5 weeks. Then it turns into pupa within the mango nut itself. The pupal period is 7 days.

The adults emerging out of the pupae remain inside the nut till they are thrown away after the consumption of the pulp. The entire life cycle is completed in 40-50 days and there is only one generation in a year.

#### Management

Avoid close planting of mango trees. Plough the soil under the trees. Maintain field sanitation. Collect and destroy the affected fruits at weekly intervals.

Dip the fruits in hot water at 50 degree celsius for two hours to kill the grubs. This treatment will not harm the fruit pulp.

Treat the bark with kerosene suspension or diazinon 0.05 per cent to kill the hiding adults before the start of fruiting season.

Apply carbaryl at 4g /lit alternated with monocrotophos at 1.5ml ml/lit at 22 days interval from the beginning of March to the end of May .

Dr. J. Jayaraj& Dr. D.S. Rajavel,Agricultural College and Research Institute, Madurai

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## Farm Query

Swollen udder

The udder of my Holstein Friesian (HF) cow breed seems to be swollen and the animal is in pain. Is there any safe home remedy for treating the swelling?

J. Ponnuraj , Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

According to Mrs. Indra Ramanathan, a progressive farmer in Erode, Tamil Nadu who maintains over 50 bargur (native) cattle breed, after calving some times the udder of the cows show symptoms of swelling and hotness.

Small onion (50 gm), salt (5 gm), turmeric (10 gm) leaves of sangan (20 gm) ( *Azima tetraacantha*) are to be ground well and the paste smeared over the udders till swelling subsides. For more details contact Mrs. Indra Ramanathan, Ramu gounder garden, Kalli patti, Kannakkanpalayam(Post), Erode district, mobiles: 93459-8108 and 93666-99999.

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**<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/03/25/stories/2010032551171500.htm>**

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## **Plant study may lead to prevention of infection**



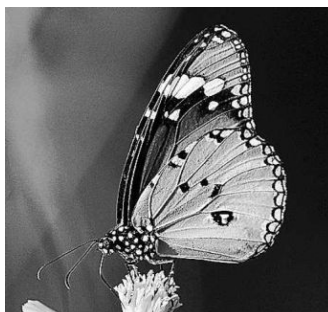
The molecular road, that a pathogen takes on its trip to infect an organism is under study. Using this pathway to create new plant varieties that do not allow pathogens inside cells may lead to prophylactics for humans.

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**<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/seta/2010/03/25/stories/2010032551211500.htm>**

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## **Butterflies' emergence tied to climate change**





Butterflies are emerging in spring over 10 days earlier than they did 65 years ago, a shift that has been linked to regional climate change. A causal link between increasing warming and the change in timing of a natural event is now seen.

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## Supermarket lighting boosts spinach quality



The fluorescent lighting in supermarkets actually can boost the nutritional value of fresh spinach. Improved ways of boosting the nutritional value of vegetables may follow this find.

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## Snack on seeds

**RECIPE** Enjoy the nutty flavour of roasted pumpkin seeds



### **CRUNCH AWAY Pumpkin seeds**

Pumpkin seeds, also known as pepitas, are flat, dark green seeds. Some are encased in a yellow-white husk, although some varieties produce seeds without shells. Pumpkin seeds have a malleable, chewy texture and a subtly sweet, nutty flavour. While roasted pumpkin seeds are probably best known for their role as a perennial Halloween treat, these seeds are so delicious and nutritious, that they can be enjoyed throughout the year.

Like cantaloupe, cucumber and squash, pumpkins and pumpkin seeds belong to the gourd or Cucurbitaceae family. The most common genus and species name for pumpkin is *Cucurbita maxima*.

Pumpkins, and their seeds, were a celebrated food of the Native American Indians who treasured them both for their dietary and medicinal properties. The cultivation of pumpkins spread throughout the world when the European explorers, returning from their journeys, brought back many of the agricultural treasures of the New World.

Whether purchasing pumpkin seeds in bulk or in a packaged container, make sure that there is no evidence of moisture or insect damage and that they are not shrivelled. If it is possible to smell the pumpkin seeds, do so in order to ensure that they are not rancid or musty.

Pumpkin seeds should be stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator. While they may stay edible for several months, they seem to lose their peak freshness after about one to two months.

Pumpkin seeds are a good source of the minerals phosphorus, magnesium and manganese. They're also a good source of protein and vitamin K.

Now, for a recipe.

Roasted pumpkin seeds

## Ingredients

Raw whole pumpkin seeds: 500 gm

Butter, melted: 20 gm

Salt: a pinch

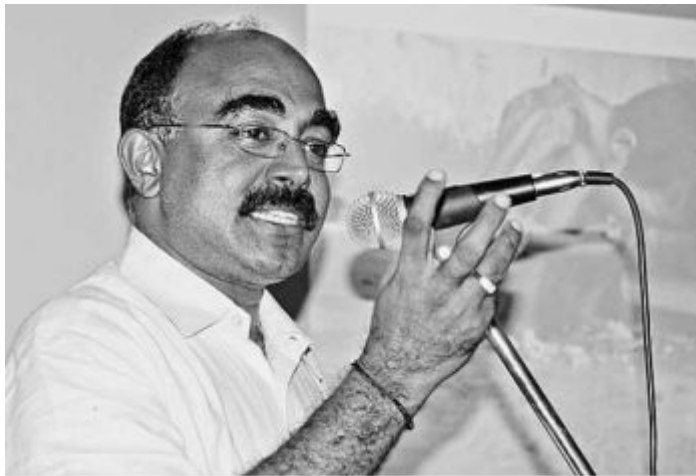
Method: Preheat oven to 300 degree F. Toss the seeds in a bowl with the melted butter and salt. Spread the seeds in a single layer on a baking sheet and bake for about 45 minutes or until they turn golden brown. Stir occasionally.

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## Take to food processing, scientist urges farmers



**TIME RIPE: K. Alagusundaram, Director, Indian Institute of Crop Processing, Thanjavur, speaks on 'Business prospects in food processing' at The Institution of Engineers in Tiruchi on Tuesday**

TIRUCHI: It is time Indian farmers measured up to their counterparts worldwide by processing and marketing food produces by themselves, thereby bringing about inclusive growth, said K. Alagusundaram, Director, Indian Institute of Crop Processing Technology (IICPT), Thanjavur.

Though India was the richest endowed agricultural nation with 66 million hectares of irrigated land constituting one-fifth of the world's irrigated area, whopping wastage of food produces, mostly fruits and vegetables, caused due to ignorance of the farming community was costing the country up to Rs. 90,000 crore, he said.

Citing the instance of Israel where ingenious farmers in desert conditions could court prosperity with just two to three acres of land holdings, Dr. Alagusundaram felt that there was no reason why India, which could thwart famine through green revolution by taking advantage of several positive factors like availability of land and water, a stable democratic environment, independent judiciary, and vibrant media, cannot follow suit.

#### Potential

In the first place, a realisation must set in that there is enormous business potential in food processing. In the coming decades, farmers cannot think of confining their role as cultivators. Organised food processing activities riding on Government schemes were bound to fetch results, Dr. Alagusundaram said, delivering a lecture on 'Business Prospects in Food Processing' organised by The Institution of Engineers (India), Tiruchi Local Centre, here on Tuesday.

With tropical climatic conditions, India was home to exotic fruits and vegetables that could be processed, packaged and exported in hygienic conditions. Meat export was another potential export area, he said. The Ministry had several programmes to provide hand-holding support to aspiring food processors to understand more about good manufacturing practices, packaging and exports. One such scheme was the large subsidy provided for setting up cold storages, he said, adding that the details could be known from the website: <http://mofpi.nic.in>.

As for Tiruchi region, there were opportunities for prospective entrepreneurs to venture into processing tomato and banana into infant food in an organised way. There was no basis to prove that food packaged by following the right procedures was not good for health.

The B.Tech, M.Tech and Ph.D programmes being offered by the IICPT were adapted to the plentiful requirement of human resource in the food processing sector. The Institute was in the process of tying up with overseas universities for international exposure to the candidates, Dr. Alagusundaram said.

J. Sankaran, honorary secretary of the Institution of Engineers (India), Tiruchi Local Centre, offered felicitations.

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## Pumpset prices go up

COIMBATORE: With a steep increase in the input costs during the last three months, pumpset manufacturers here have started revising upwards the list prices of their products.

President of the Southern India Engineering Manufacturers' Association Jayakumar Ramdass told 'The Hindu' here on Tuesday that the cost of pig iron, steel, aluminium, plastics and copper went up by 5 to 12 per cent during the last three months. Apart from these, the freight costs had also increased with the hike in petrol and diesel prices.

"The market for pumpsets is good. But, the bottom line is affected. Hence, the manufacturers have started increasing the product prices," he said.

The price increase for the end product ranged from five to 10 per cent and depended on the brand, product mix and marketability of the product. While some manufacturers had implemented the revised prices from March 15, many more were expected to do so from April 1. Several manufacturers had already cut down the discount schemes.

Mr. Ramdass said the power cost was expected to go up further in the coming two months and the industries here were facing severe labour shortage. Thus, there was a pressure on the manufacturing costs. Normally, the pumpset prices were revised once a year or once in two years. The last revision was in 2008 and it was brought down when the duties were reduced. Now, the manufacturers were forced to hike the pumpset prices as they were unable able to absorb completely the spiralling raw material costs. Some manufacturers were going in for value added engineering and alternative raw materials too, he said.

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**Wild elephants stray into human habitation near Hosur**



**Straying: Wild elephants, which entered Kumudepalli village, being driven into the Sanamavu forest near Hosur on Tuesday.**

HOSUR: Three male wild elephants strayed into human habitation near Hosur on Tuesday.

According to forest officials, the elephants aged between 15 and 20 strayed into Kumudhepalli village in the morning. On information, the officials led by District Forest Officer V. Ganesan, Assistant Conservator of Forests K. Rajendran and Hosur Ranger R. Madheswaran drove the pachyderms to the nearby Sanamavu Reserve Forests with the help of the villagers by bursting crackers.

Wild elephants entering into the human habitations have become an order of the day for the past three to five months. They did not harm anybody during the operation.

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**Efforts to be made for a 'plastic-free' environment**

*Collector seeks cooperation from vendors to use paper bags*

KARAIKAL: A consultative meeting to work out the modalities for the implementation of the Puducherry government's recent ban on plastic bags was held here at the Collectorate on Wednesday.

The Puducherry Government has placed a ban on use of plastics in the Puducherry region.

In pursuance of the implementation of the ban, a meeting was organised to enforce the ban on pilot basis in T.R. Pattinam constituency of Karaikal.

Speaking on the occasion, N. Vasantha Kumar, Collector, stated that all efforts would be taken up to ensure the spirit of the ban, which was to usher in a 'plastic-free' environment. Further, assistance would be provided to ensure replacing plastic bags with paper bags and adequate manufacture and supply of paper bags would be taken up, Mr. Vasantha Kumar said. The Collector requested vendors to use paper bags and cooperate with the administration in this endeavour.

V.M.C. Sivakumar, MLA, T.R. Pattinam expressed hope that his constituency would lead the way forward in ensuring an eco-friendly environment.

Vinod Kavalee, Assistant Collector, Abel Rozario, Deputy Collector and R. Mohan, Joint Director, Planning were present.

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## **Less meat consumption is not less global warming**

Eating less meat will not reduce global warming, and claims that it will distract from efforts to find real solutions to climate change, a leading air quality expert said recently.

"We certainly can reduce our greenhouse gas production, but not by consuming less meat and milk," Frank Mitloehner, an air quality expert at the University of California-Davis.

Blaming cows and pigs for climate change is scientifically inaccurate, said Mitloehner, dismissing several reports, including one issued in 2006 by the United Nations, which he said overstate the role that livestock play in global warming.

The UN report which said livestock cause more greenhouse gases than all global transportation combined, distracts from the real issues involved, said Mitloehner.

The notion that eating less meat will help to combat climate change has spawned campaigns for "meatless Mondays" and a European campaign launched late last year called "Less Meat = Less Heat," backed by former Beatle Paul McCartney, one of the world's best-known vegetarians.

"McCartney and others seem to be well-intentioned but not well-schooled in the complex relationships among human activities, animal digestion, food production and atmospheric chemistry," said Mitloehner.

"Smarter animal farming, not less farming, will equal less heat," Mitloehner said. "Producing less meat and milk will only mean more hunger in poor countries," he said.

Rather than focusing on producing and eating less meat, Mitloehner said developed countries “should focus on cutting our use of oil and coal for electricity, heating and vehicle fuels.

In the United States, transportation creates an estimated 26 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions, whereas raising cattle and pigs for food accounts for about three percent, he said.

The UN report , issued in 2006, said global livestock rearing was responsible for 18 percent of greenhouse gas emissions measured in carbon dioxide equivalents.

The UN report said that was more than the greenhouse gases produced worldwide by transport.

Mitloehner said the UN report did not compare like with like when it analyzed the role of livestock versus fossil fuel emissions. — AFP

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## At Rs 70 cr per year, opium is Naxal cash crop

**Santosh Singh** Posted online: Thursday ,

Mar 25, 2010 at 0024 hrs

**Patna :** Even as the Bihar Police step up operations to choke Naxal revenue, Intelligence sources claim the ultras have been making over Rs 70 crore per year only from opium cultivation in the “red zone” — Aurangabad, Nawada, Gaya, Jamui in Bihar and Chatra and Palamau in Jharkhand — where poor farmers are being forced to grow the banned substance, used to make expensive spurious drugs.

According to sources, Bihar Jharkhand Special Area Committee (BJSAC) of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) gets an annual revenue of around Rs 300 crore, coming mostly from levy collection.



The Bihar Police, which recently raided opium fields at two places in Nawada and Aurangabad districts, conceded that "opium cultivation is a good source of revenue for the ultras". As most of opium cultivation takes place on forest land and in hilly areas, it is not easily tracked during normal police patrolling. Opium is harvested around this time of the year.

The Naxals generally force or influence poor farmers to grow the banned substance. It is a deliberate ploy by the ultras as when the cultivation is detected, it is the farmers who face arrests. Though farmers would concede they grow opium for the "party" (ultras), they seldom identify the Maoists, said police sources. While a kilogram of opium sells for nearly Rs 1.5 lakh, heroin produced from it is worth Rs 1.5 crore in the international market.

The Aurangabad Police recently destroyed opium crop on about one acre land at Kapasia village under Muffasil police station. Two farmers were arrested for the cultivation but none identified the ultras who had asked them to grow the banned substance. Sources claim opium is grown along Sone river in Navinagar and Barul blocks of Aurangabad.

Aurangabad SP Nishant Kumar Tiwari said: "As opium is grown in areas adjoining Naxal hubs, we assume the ultras are getting it cultivated. Opium is definitely a good source of Naxal revenue."

The SP said the police are using satellite imaging to pin-point the exact location where opium is grown. "We get a different colour for opium crops in satellite images. No Maoist, however, has been arrested so far as the villagers do not divulge details," said Tewari.

A fortnight ago, the Nawada Police seized two trucks loaded with harvested opium crop grown at Harkhar village along Nawada-Jamui border. No one, however, could be arrested for the crop seizure.

Bihar DGP Neelmani conceded that opium was a regular source of Naxal revenue and said the state needed more of forces with specialised training to choke this source of income for the ultras.

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## Laser security for the Internet developed

**ANI** Posted online: Wednesday,  
Mar 24, 2010 at 12:09 hrs

**Washington** : Experts have come up with a new security system for Internet using a special laser that may help keep hackers' prying eyes off for good.

Scientists at Tel Aviv University have developed a digital security tool with existing fiber optic and computer technology that transmits binary lock-and-key information in the form of light pulses.

The device, invented by Dr. Jacob Scheuer, TAU's School of Electrical Engineering, allegedly ensures that a shared key code can be unlocked by the sender and receiver, and absolutely nobody else.

Dr. Scheuer explained: "Rather than developing the lock or the key, we've developed a system which acts as a type of key bearer."

The researchers continued: "The trick is for those at either end of the fibre optic link to send different laser signals they can distinguish between, but which look identical to an eavesdropper."

Dr. Scheuer added: "We've already published the theoretical idea and now have developed a preliminary demonstration in my lab. Once both parties have the key they need, they could send information without any chance of detection. We were able to demonstrate that, if it's done right, the system could be absolutely secure. Even with a quantum computer of the future, a hacker couldn't decipher the key."

The findings were due to be presented at the next laser and electro-optics conference at the Conference for Lasers and Electro-Optics (CLEO) in San Jose, California.