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## Cash award for Villupuram farmers

VILLUPURAM: A cash award of Rs. 10,000 was given to S. Jayaram, a farmer belonging to Pandamangalam near here, for having produced second highest yield of horsegram per acre in the State.

Collector in-charge N. Venkatachalam gave away a cheque at the farmers' grievance day meeting held here on Friday. A paddy farmer and a groundnut grower bagged the first and second prizes of Rs. 15,000 and Rs. 10,000, Mr. Venkatachalam said, urging all farmers to emulate the prize winners.

Farmers put forth demands such as uninterrupted power supply, replacement of faulty transformers, repairing damaged roads and removal of encroachments from waterbodies.

Mr. Venkatachalam promised action on their grievances. Joint Director of Agriculture K. Ramalingam highlighted the advantages of soil testing prior to crop cultivation. He said that testing could be done for a nominal fee of Rs. 5 either at agricultural extension centres or mobile soil testing centres. The testing would help the farmers choose the right kind and quantum of fertilizers and crops.

Mr. Ramalingam said that soil samples obtained from 10 places in an acre could be mixed and, from the heap, half-a-kg of soil could be collected and sent for testing.

Depending upon crop selection, the soil samples should be collected from various depths .

In case of saline and high-chloride content soils, samples should be collected at the intervals of one foot each for a total depth of three feet. Mr. Ramalingam noted that depending upon the testing, the soil could be enriched to make it suitable for a particular crop.

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### **“Agricultural Engineering has flourishing job prospects”**

TIRUCHI: The four year B. Tech (Agricultural Engineering) degree programme offered by the Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute at Kumulur near here, a constituent college of the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), has flourishing job prospects, according to a press release of A. Tajudeen, Dean of the Institute.

The Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute, Kumulur, is the only agricultural college offering this course in the State. The B. Tech (Agricultural Engineering) degree is an inter-disciplinary study of biological and physical sciences and their applications in Agricultural Engineering. It involves design and management of systems which include farm equipment, bio-environmental engineering of plant and animal production and conservation of soil and water resources, the release said.

About 50 students completed this degree and all of them are instantly placed in jobs in various industries like Swaraj Tractors, Jain Irrigation Systems Limited, Escorts Tractors Limited, Netafirm Irrigation India Private Limited, Texmo Industries and Dhan Foundation with attractive emoluments.

The release called upon Plus Two completed students to take full advantage of this programme. The interested can contact Dean, Agricultural Engineering College and Research Institute, TNAU, Kumulur – 621 712 (Tiruchi district), phone 0431 – 2541218.

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## **Fruit show concludes**

Udhagamandalam: A move of the Nilgiris Flower and Fruit Show Committee to advance the Fruit Show, the most important tourism and horticulture related activity in Coonoor by a week, paid rich dividends with bright sunshine marking the two-day event which concluded at the Sim's Park on Sunday. Thousands of tourists and local people enjoyed the show.

At the valedictory function, the Khadi Board Minister K. Ramachandran underscored the need to change the manner in which various shows are being organised during the tourist season here.

He suggested that from next year only flowers should be displayed at the Annual Floral Carnival in Ooty.

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## The Mango Victim

CHENNAI: Don't even envy my profession. I just recovered from a severe headache and stomach upset. And I did not fall sick because I gorged on spoilt biryani or burger. It was the naive looking mangoes that I ate at a friend's place. Fruits are absolutely harmless and impossible to adulterate but for people with only business in mind, anything is achievable. Just two pieces, and within an hour I had severe stomach cramp, uneasiness and by morning, fever and body ache. It was a doctor who gave prescription drugs and warned me against CaC2 mangoes.

Mainly used in the welding industry, calcium carbide produces acetylene gas that is a powerful ripening agent. Mango vendors use them too. The chemical substance is black in colour and placed in sachets inside baskets or sacks of mangoes.

Yes, the corporation did conduct surprise raids at Koyembedu vegetable market and has posted warnings. Yet these fruits are lurching at large. I am told that now vendors are smarter and use paper treated with carbide to wrap the fruits.

I spoke to several people and most of them were wary of eating mangoes this season. "How can you check if a vegetable or fruit that claims to come from an organic farm really comes from one? I don't want to fall sick and moreover schools are opening soon, so I strictly avoid giving my children mangoes and settle for the usual bananas and apples," says Savitha Gopal.

Some housewives capitalise on the drop in mango prices and cleverly prepare jams, juice concentrates and pickles (don't know if that will kill the CaC2 if present). "Not everyone sells these Satanic fruits. We sell the best varieties like Banganpalli and Alphonso," protests a sales man at Nilgiris supermarket. Well the discussion is not about the breed or taste. I just want to know how to find out if a mango has been chemically ripened? A few told me that the yellow colour might seem funny with plenty

of black spots. Now what is “funny yellow” and precisely how many black spots should one count? Most of the answers that I received were unsatisfactory and that brings us back to square one. For the moment, I shall just take lessons in tree climbing.

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## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

**Monday, May 24**

Max Min

39.3° | 27.8°

Rain: Trace

Sunrise: 05:41

Humidity: 84%

Sunset: 18:29

Wind: Normal

Barometer: 1004.0

### Tomorrow's Forecast



Cloudy

**Tuesday, May 25**

Max Min

37° | 28°

### Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday May 26	Thursday May 27	Friday May 28	Saturday May 29	Sunday May 30
38°   30°	37°   30°	37°   29°	37°   28°	37°   29°
Partly Cloudy	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy	Partly Cloudy