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“Increase production using technology”

*Five-day farmers' conference and exhibition inaugurated*



**ENLIGHTENMENT:**A. Tamilarasi, Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare, releasing a souvenir to mark the conference at TNAU in the city on Sunday. (Extreme left) P. Murugesaboopathi, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU – Coimbatore, C. Kamaraj (second from right), Collector, and K.P.T. Ganesan (extreme right), Chairman, Tamil Nadu Agriculture Marketing Board, are seen.

**MADURAI:** Farmers must take to the latest technology and utilise modern methods of farming and sophisticated equipment to increase productivity, said A. Tamilarasi, Minister for Adi Dravidar Welfare.

Delivering inaugural address of five-day 'ATMA Kharif 2010 farmers conference' organised at the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) here on Sunday, she said

that the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) had introduced many schemes to aid farmers.

Noting the large women participation in the conference, she said that this showed that they were being empowered by the self-help group (SHG) movement, which is being actively encouraged by the State Government. More than 10,000 SHGs would be formed next year with a funding of Rs. 10 crore, she said.

A total of Rs. 4,181 crore was given away as crop loans through cooperative societies alone last year. Further, while the total amount for crop loan given out last year was Rs. 2,013 crore, the current year's target has been pegged at Rs. 2,500 crore. Acceding to farmer's demands, the Minimum Support Price for sugarcane and paddy had been substantially increased. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) regime went to great lengths to safeguard the interests of farming community, said Ms. Tamilarasi.

Speaking earlier, P. Murugesaboopathi, Vice-Chancellor, TNAU – Coimbatore, said that the growth of population in the country was 1.8 per cent with agriculture sector growing at 2.2 per cent. Assuring that the declining numbers of farmers was not a major issue, he said that the United States had only 10 per cent of its population engaged in agriculture.

Israel, a country that sees only 90 mm of annual rainfall, was now exporting agricultural produce through judicious use of water. However, India, despite receiving between 850 mm and 1,000 mm of rainfall, was importing food.

A team of consultants from Israel undertook research at water-deficient districts such as Pudukottai, Ramanathapuram and Virudhunagar, following which their modern methods of farming were being implemented in these districts, informed Mr. Murugesaboopathi.

C. Kamaraj, District Collector, said that the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan had unveiled many initiatives focussing on agriculture sector. The yield per acre in Madurai district had gone up following the adoption of System of Rice Intensification (SRI), he added.

P. Sankaralingam, Joint Director (Agriculture), P. Moorthy, Sholavandhan MLA, K. P. T. Ganesan, Chairman, Tamil Nadu Agriculture Marketing Board, P. Ashok Kumar, Chairman, District Panchayat Council, K. Vairavan, Dean, Agricultural College and Research Institute, TNAU, spoke.

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### Water problem gets worse in city



**DESPERATE SITUATION: A migrant worker tries to collect water from a leaking main line for his daily needs on the Banjara Hills Road.**

Hyderabad: A demonstration with empty pots may be an annual ritual for public representatives, but for many residents in the State capital they are becoming a harrowing fact. With summer peaking, the elixir of life is getting scarcer by the day. Notwithstanding what the Water Board says, the supplies have suddenly turned short and erratic.

Complaints of insufficient supplies are pouring in from several areas. "We are getting water alright but it is very meagre," is the refrain. Some areas are experiencing the problem of supplies suddenly stopping without notice. For instance, in parts of Nehru Nagar in East Marredpally several houses went without water for two days recently.

#### Crisis in Malkajgiri

The situation in Malkajgiri is simply worse. Nearly 40 per cent of the area is getting water once in 10 days, forcing residents to depend on tankers. The problem has arisen due to supplies stopping from the Defence Colony reservoir consequent on water level in the Singur reservoir dropping. The other reservoir at Gowthamnagar gets Krishna water. "We tried to represent the problem to Chief Minister K. Rosaiah, the other day when he visited A.S. Rao Nagar, but we were not allowed to meet him. In fact the police beat up women who wanted to submit a representation," said B.T. Srinivasan, vice president, United Federation of Residents Welfare Association.

#### Situation acute

Same is the case in the surrounding localities. The problem is more acute in parts of the old city like Sultan Shahi, Gowlipura, Lal Darwaza, Uppuguda and Lalitabagh. The main problem here is of low pressure. Recently the supply was switched to alternate day. "But now it is restored", says Adil of Falaknuma.

In interior areas like Bandlaguda, Hashamabad, Errakunta one can see residents fetching water from far off places. The area being hilly, houses here have problem getting water. As such, some residents have constructed sumps at lower levels to collect water. In peripheral areas too, it is an endless struggle for water. Long rows of empty pots are a regular feature here.

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## **Water level in dam rises by more than a foot in 24 hours**

THENI: The water level in Vaigai dam rose by more than a foot in the last 24 hours, thanks to sudden spurt in inflow in to the dam. Water level stood at 31.40 feet in Vaigai dam, 1.61 feet higher than the previous level of 29.79 feet on Saturday. Inflow into the dam was 841 cusecs and the discharge 41 cusecs.

Inflow into the dam shot up by over 800 cusecs on Sunday from just 204 cusecs on Saturday.

The flow in major rivers in the district was good.

Farmers in Cumbum Valley were very happy as the water level in Periyar dam touched 110 feet following steady increase in inflow into the dam and intermittent showers. But several parts of the district did not receive rain at all. Inflow into the dam was 185 cusecs and the discharge nil.

Rainfall recorded at various places at 8 a.m. on Sunday (in mm): Periyar 19, Thekkadi 4.2, Gudalur 1.2 Veerapandi 1. No rain was recorded in any other parts of the district.

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## **Farmers seek increase in milk procurement price**

*Association threatens stir if government fails to increase price*

ERODE: The Tamil Nadu Farmers' Association has urged the State Government to increase the procurement price of milk.

A resolution passed at the district committee meeting of the association held here on Saturday said that the input cost for milk production had increased manifold in the recent past.

But the government had not taken any steps to enhance the milk procurement price till date.

The government should take immediate steps to increase the procurement price by at least Rs. 5 per litre.

The association threatened that it would stage a series of agitations in the State if the government failed to increase the procurement price.

### Subsidy

Association members also wanted the Central and State governments to provide 100 per cent subsidy to the farmers for the installation of micro irrigation systems (drip and sprinkler irrigation systems).

Apart from enabling farmers to conserve water, the process of micro irrigation would help them to enhance the productivity of various crops, they pointed out.

Members who were present passed a resolution to this effect at the meeting.

In another resolution, the association urged the district administration to initiate stern action against the leather and dyeing units, which were letting out effluents into the water carrying channels.

The continuous discharge of effluents into the water carrying channels had polluted

the environment.

“The soil is fast becoming unproductive. The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board, which is supposed to take action against the units polluting the environment, has virtually stopped functioning,” the association charged.

Association members decided to put an end to the discharge of effluents into the water carrying channels with the help of general public.

The association also urged the State Government to take action against those selling time-barred drugs.

Expired drugs

Action should also be initiated against those who were disposing of the expired drugs in open space.

District president of the association E.R. Kumarasamy presided over the committee meeting.

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**Shortfall in supply hits mango prices**

*However, watermelons, muskmelons and cucumbers available in plenty*



**With the dip in the mango harvest this year, the summer fruit is likely to be priced higher.**

CHENNAI: Hot, bothered and thirsty? One way to beat the heat is to bite into a juicy melon or crunch on a crisp cucumber. Fortunately, the city is lavishly dotted with makeshift shops on the platforms and hawkers who make summer tolerable with seasonal fruits.

This year, however, savouring the season's bounty comes at a cost. Plump mangoes, juicy watermelons, muskmelons and crunchy cucumbers have promptly arrived this season but with increased price tags.

Mangoes, especially, are seeing a 50 per cent rise in prices, as the supply to Chennai is not even 20 per cent that of last year. Observes S. Chandran, secretary of Koyambedu Market Licensed Merchants Association: "One tonne costs around Rs.25,000 to Rs.30,000. We primarily source it from Salem and Vijayawada," he said. Tirupati and Palakkad used to be the major suppliers of Banganapalli, but the supply has shrunk owing to paucity of rain. Arrival of other varieties such as Alphonso has also come down and Rumani is expected only in June.

Watermelons and muskmelons (kirni) compensate for mangoes, with their abundance along roadsides. Watermelons, which come easy on pockets, are first pick for juice lovers and seen as an ideal fruit to combat dehydration during



summer.

Slices of watermelons are neatly stacked in many areas, as cut-fruit sellers make a brisk business by drawing commuters who stop by for an immediate sugar fix.

“From Rs.5 a piece to Rs.15, watermelons are sold according to their sizes and most melons are juicy and sugary,” says Dhanammal, who has put up a makeshift shop near Loyola College.

Juice kiosks such as Selva Fruit Juice Shop in T.Nagar have stocked creamy muskmelons in good numbers, sensing demand. “Kirnis make for the major chunk of the business during summer.

Every day, we dish out at least 50 glasses of kirni juice,” says Selvaganapathi, the owner. The unassuming tender coconuts, which began to dominate the market much before the onset of summer, are still arguably one of the seasonal best-sellers. Priced from Rs.15 to Rs.20 each, tender coconuts find good takers on busy stretches such as Arcot Road and G.N.Chetty Road.

Compensating for the lesser arrival of mangoes, apples and sweet lime (saathukudi) manage to get takers during summer.

“Nearly 90 per cent of sweet lime is sourced from Andhra Pradesh. The fruit is available in plenty round the year,” says S.Srinivasan, president, Koyambedu Wholesale Fruits Association.

Nearly 300 tonnes of sweet lime arrive every day, mainly from Hyderabad and sometimes from Maharastra. Apples from Himachal Pradesh might turn out to be lesser expensive than last year. “Snowfall across the world was good which has led to frequent arrivals of apples,” Mr. Chandran said.

*By Archana Jyoti*

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## Lodhi Garden aflutter with butterflies



NEW DELHI: If you admire butterflies then it's time to head towards Lodhi Garden in the national capital where hundreds of exquisite colourful winged jewels of nature are all set to fire your imagination.

In barely seven months, the butterfly conservatory set up in the three acres of land has become the abode of a wide-ranging attractive winged insects, flitting from one flower to another.

Angled Caster, Common Leopard, Common Evening Brown, Small Orange tips, Grass Jewels, Spirited Tiger, Plain Tiger and Peacock Paney are some of the many butterfly species to ensure a visual delight at the park.

"We hope the conservatory to boost the declining butterfly count in the city as at least 24 species of these fragile creatures have been already spotted in and around it.

"Over 51 new species of larval host plants have been planted to provide a site for the butterfly to lay eggs and also food source for the emerging caterpillar," says NDMC Assistant Director (Horticulture) Satyender Pal.

For instance, the Angled Castor feeds on *Ricinus communis*, Alfalfa butterfly on clovers and deerweed, *Tragia involucrate* and Black rajah on the tamarind tree, Banded Blue Pierrot on *Ziziphus Oenophila* and Cabbage White on many plants in mustard family and cabbage family etc.

"Many of these plants, such as *Murraya exotica*, *Grewia asiatica* and *Lantana camara* have been brought from Aravali and Yamuna bio-diversity parks," says ecologist M Saha Hussain

from Center for Environmental Management of Degraded Ecosystems (CEMDE), Delhi University.

Hussain who has given technical guidance for creating the conservatory is currently engaged in developing miniature eco-system including butterfly garden in the bio-diversity parks.

The specially created space carved out of around 90 acres of Lodhi Garden is presently out of bounds for the public, but as it has been built in a low depression one can easily see the most fascinating insects from outside.

An insectary has been setup for keeping larvae of butterflies and has been covered with a net for the safety of the larvae from the birds.

"As the butterflies which has life-span of 55 days, are very sensitive in nature, we are using only organic manure instead of any insecticide, pesticide and chemicals. Also, efforts are ensured to use clean water for the plants in the conservatory," says Pal.

A lotus lily pond and mud pond have also been developed which have become favourite congregation spots of the butterflies. The nearby herbal garden has come as an advantage where one can notice many pupa out of which butterfly emerges.

"Butterflies serve as an excellent barometer of our environment because of their sensitive nature to habitat destruction. Over the years, the number of these coloured creatures have dwindled due to climatic changes, pollution and shrinking of the green cover," says Suhas Borker of an NGO, Green Circle, which has helped in setting up the project.

There are around 72 identified species of butterflies in Delhi, according to Hussain.

The concept of such mini butterfly garden is fast catching up with the authorities. Other such conservatories are being planned by NDMC in gardens like the Nehru Park.

Delhi-based Maulana Azad Medical College (MAMC) too proposes a similar conservatory while IIT- Gwalior has already set up one with an aim to create awareness about eco-system among its management students, says Borker.

According to some estimates, there are about 20,000 butterfly species worldwide of which 1,501 are in India.



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## Sugar prices fall in retail market, says

### Pawar

Government today said sugar prices, which had touched Rs 50 per kg in the retail market, have come down and the rates would further decline with major improvement in production in the current season.

Answering questions in the Rajya Sabha, Food and Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar disagreed with Opposition members that sugar prices have not fallen in the recent past.

"It is true that sugar is being sold at Rs 35 per kg in some places. But considering that last year it was selling at Rs 50 per kg, prices have indeed come down," Pawar said.

He said government expects sugar production of 180 lakh tonnes in the present season (October 2009-September 2010). Last year the production was significantly low at 150 lakh tonnes leading to shortages and price hike.

"I am sure that sugar prices will go down," he said, adding more sugarcane would be planted in the wake of attractive cane prices paid to the farmers.

"The kinds of prices given to them last year were never ever offered. If prices are good, greater number of farmers would be encouraged to plant sugarcane," he said.

Pawar asked Opposition members to be realistic stating that they cannot expect sugar to be sold at Rs 15 per kg if farmers have to be paid a fair price for cane. A balance between sugar consumer and cane producer has to be maintained, he said. The minister said import duty on sugar was removed last year to rein in prices.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/StoryPage/Print/537609.aspx>

## Weather

Chennai - INDIA

### Today's Weather

	<b>Monday, May 3</b>	
	Max	Min
Partly Cloudy	34.2°   25.8°	
Rain: 03mm in24hrs	Sunrise: 05:48	
Humidity: 34%	Sunset: 18:24	
Wind: Normal	Barometer: 1008.1mb	

### Tomorrow's Forecast

	<b>Tuesday, May 4</b>	
	Max	Min
Tstorm	36°   26°	

### Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday May 5	Thursday May 6	Friday May 7	Saturday May 8	Sunday May 9
36°   26°	36°   26°	36°   27°	36°   27°	36°   26°
Tstorm	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny