

Betel vineyards destroyed for Posco project

Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti to intensify agitation if land acquisition continues



PROTEST RESUMES: People of Dhinkia and Nuagaon blocking the road to the Posco site in Jagatsingh-pur, Odisha, on Sunday.— Photo: Lingaraj Panda

“There was heavy fog when we found the police reaching Batatikira and they beat me up and other men, women and children,” said Manorama Khatua, an active member of the Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti, referring to the lathi charge on agitating villagers on Sunday, when land acquisition for the Posco steel project resumed here.

Since January 14, hundreds of villagers had been agitating peacefully, forming a human chain, at Batatikira against further acquisition of land.

On Sunday, demolition of vineyards and felling of trees here were stopped after hundreds of people came out to oppose the administration’s move to acquire more land. However, a senior administration official claimed that 80 per cent of the residents of Gobindpur supported land acquisition.

During the day, 12 betel vineyards belonging to those who had given their consent for land acquisition were destroyed and they were paid compensation by cheque, the official said.

The Collector and the Superintendent of Police of Jagatsinghpur were present at the spot.

Posco Pratirodh Sangram Samiti leader Abhay Sahu, countered the administration's claim saying that actually 80 per cent of the people were against handing over their land.

Millions of betel leaves were crushed as the vineyards came crashing down under tractors. Many growers who oppose the land acquisition drive stood mute, even as a few villagers accepted the compensation.

The administration officials, who came back from Gobindpur after the Sangram Samiti demanded immediate withdrawal of police from the area, told *The Hindu* that land acquisition would continue in the days to come.

Mr. Sahu claimed that the police took two people into custody during clashes early in the morning and released one of them by evening, while sending the other to court.

“Stir will be intensified”

The Samiti has decided to intensify its agitation if the administration continues with the land acquisition and does not withdraw policemen.

Progressive farmers seek enhanced technology

Progressive farmers from across the State recently appealed to the policy-makers seeking induction of technology innovations, specially bio-technology applications, in agriculture for improved productivity.

For quite some time, representatives of progressive farmers' organisations have been meeting Members of Parliament and of the Legislative Assembly, apart from senior officials of departments concerned, drawing their attention to the challenges faced by farmers and to what they described as 'compelling' need for integration of technology in the sector.

Considering the ever-increasing costs of inputs, introduction of better seeds that could resist pests, weeds and could guarantee enhanced yields was the need of the hour for major crops that included rice, maize, pulses, oilseeds and vegetables too, said Mekala Lakshminarayana, President, Nagarjuna Rythu Samakhya of Guntur.

Reaped Benefit

Mr. Lakshminarayana and another farmer from the State's rice-growing belt, V. Subba Rao, said the farming community had benefitted immensely from Bt. cotton and hoped that the Government would soon allow commercialisation of other crops and extend benefits of technology to other farmers too.

'Sow Neerbogam potato'

The Domestic and Export Market Intelligence Cell (DEMIC) of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University has forecast the price of potato to be Rs. 18 to Rs. 20 a kg in May-June when the Neerbogam potato will be harvested.

Market price

According to a release, this analysis has been made based on the prevailing market price at the Nilgiris Co-operative Marketing Society, Mettupalayam, for the last 22 years.

Expedite relief measures to farmers: CITU

The State unit of the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) has urged the State government to expedite sanction of relief measures to protect farmers of the delta and agricultural labourers in view of the failure of samba crop.

Demanding a complete waiver of crop loans taken by farmers, the CITU also urged the Centre to sanction Rs. 1,000 crore from the natural calamities fund for the Cauvery delta districts.

Explaining the resolutions adopted at the on-going four-day CITU State-unit conference being held here, its State general secretary and Communist Party of India (Marxist) leader in the Assembly, A. Soundararajan said the State government should provide Rs. 10 lakh as compensation to the families of farmers who had committed suicide owing to the failure of the

samba crop. The government should provide Rs. 25,000 as compensation per acre for paddy crop that had completely withered and Rs. 10,000 each to families of farm labourers.

Water level

Water level in the Papanasam dam on Sunday stood at 55.25 feet (permissible level is 143 feet). The dam had an inflow of 135.30 cusecs and 704.75 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam. The level of Manimuthar dam stood at 81.25 feet with an inflow of 8 cusecs and 35 cusecs of water was discharged from the dam.

Mettur level

The water level in the Mettur Dam stood at 34.77 feet on Sunday, against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 405 cusecs and the discharge, 500 cusecs.

NABARD credit proposals released

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has projected credit requirements of various sectors in Villupuam district for the next financial year (2013-2014) at Rs. 3,367.21 crore, according to Collector V. Sampath.

He was making this observation while releasing credit proposals prepared by the NABARD at a bankers' meeting here. Mr. Sampath said that during the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2012-2017), Tamil Nadu aimed at achieving an annual growth rate of 8.2 per cent.

NABARD proposals were prepared keeping that in mind. To give a thrust to farming operation, adequate provisions would be made to extend crop loans, setting up godowns for stacking essential commodities in rural areas, food processing units and for rearing cattle heads.

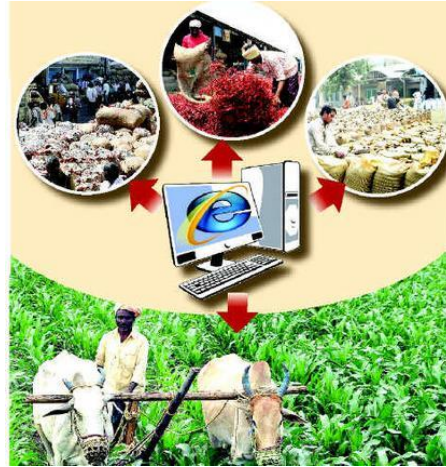
Bank loans for farm sector would be likely to be in the order of Rs. 1,348.03 crore, short-term crop loans to be extended would be about Rs. 1,522.80 crore, allocation for non-farming sector would be Rs. 175.98 and for other priority sector Rs. 320.40 crore.

Mr. Sampath said that based on NABARD projections, the Lead Bank in the district would prepare the Annual Credit Plan. He underscored the point that the ACP would encourage

farmers to take to horticulture crops in a significant manner in the district. He called upon all bankers to extend their cooperation in realising the goals to be set in the Annual Credit Plan.

NABARD Deputy General Manager A. Balachandran, DGM of Indian Bank S. Natarajan, and District Development Officer (Reserve Bank of India) J. Kandasamy were present.

Farmers to get relief from middlemen



Farmers in the State will command the prevailing price, if not a higher price, for their produce if the plans of the Marketing Department succeed.

Taking cue from a pilot project under implementation in Gulbarga in Karnataka, the Marketing Department has decided to take up mandi modernisation, and web-basing of the agriculture market committees, in three major commodities markets in the State. The project will be rolled out in Nizamabad, Warangal and Guntur markets while efforts are under way to include two more.

Once it takes shape, farmers will get relief from middlemen, a menace that continues in spite of numerous efforts. The project was first proposed by the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange (NCDEX) to link all the agriculture produce market committees for trading commodities, non-perishables in particular, by enabling farmers to virtually participate in auction of the commodities at the national level. This, in turn, will ensure that the farmer is not dependent on a particular market or a set of traders to sell his produce at the prices dictated by the latter, but can command the prevailing price which will be displayed at the yard.

The project will ensure that e-tendering and e-auction processes are put in place for the products entering the market yards. "Each lot will be given a unique code so that its movement from entry into the market to its exit including the information about buyer is recorded," Marketing Commissioner G. Venkat Ram Reddy said.

According to NCDEX vice-president, south, Ramesh Chand H.C, the pilot project in Karnataka covers 15 major mandis out of the 54. Trading is currently allowed in eight commodities. The first phase of automating the mandis has been completed. In the second phase, standardisation of products will be taken up and the third phase comprises development of technology and infrastructure for making the mandis web-based. "The process is aimed at enhancing competitiveness and this will significantly boost returns for farmers," Mr. Ramesh Chand said. A new system ought to be put in for perishables like fruits and vegetables as their shelf life will be so short that there is no scope for their transfer from one mandi to another.

Agriculture markets to changeover to web based auction which will ensure that the farmer is not dependent on a particular market or a set of traders to sell his produce at the prices dictated by the latter

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'Government is ignoring the agricultural sector'

K.M. Udupa, managing trustee of Bharatiya Vikas Trust, said on Saturday that the government was not giving much importance to the agriculture sector.

He was speaking after inaugurating the "Krishi Utsav" organised by Sri Kshetra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP) and other organisations at Parkala here.

Mr. Udupa said that youths in rural areas were uninterested in agriculture. They were migrating to urban areas in search of white-collar jobs. They held the notion that agriculture was not a profitable occupation.

However, there were many good farmers in the district, who had shown how profitable agriculture could be if proper thought and techniques were applied.

It was essential to include agriculture in school curricula. This way many students would learn the importance of agriculture and get interested in it, he said.

There was no point in sending batches of farmers from the State to China merely to witness that country's progress in the agrarian sector. It was a fact that China had made rapid strides in increasing its foodgrain production, Mr. Udupa said.

"Krishi utsavs play a vital role in encouraging farmers. A large number of farmers visit such them, hoping to learn something new and also to learn about the latest agricultural equipment," Mr. Udupa said.

Pratapchandra Shetty, MLC, Upendra Nayak, president of the zilla panchayat, Kudi Srinivas Bhat, progressive farmer, K. Madhusudhan Hegde, Lions Club district governor, Gowri Poojarti, president of the Udupi Taluk Panchayat, Sridevi, president of the Yembattu Badagabettu Gram Panchayat and K. Purushotham, president of the Federation of Pragati Bandhu Self-Help Group, were present.

Exhibition

The exhibition had stalls showcasing agricultural equipment, handicrafts, solar lighting equipment, tillers and grass cutters, vegetable seeds, and books on agriculture.

In addition, there were models of 'Kambala' (buffalo race) and cock fights. A large number of farmers visited these stalls.

Foxtail millet good for diabetes patients



The area under which minor millets is grown is shrinking year after year in Kurnool district as has been the trend elsewhere in State.

Foxtail millet (*Sataria italica*), which used to be cultivated in an area of two lakh hectare in the district two decades ago has now shrunk to 20,000 hectare.

The millet, known as Korra in local parlance, remains to be the staple diet of rural people. However, after the introduction of the subsidised rice scheme in the early eighties, people switched over to rice and the demand started declining for millet.

However, of late, the importance of foxtail millet was recognised as diabetic food. The millet is rich in dietary fibre (6.7 per cent), protein (11 per cent) and low in fat (four per cent).

Unlike rice, foxtail millet releases glucose steadily without affecting the metabolism of the body. The incidence of diabetes is rare among the population which consumes foxtail millet diet.

According to G. Narasimha Rao, former scientist of Agriculture University, foxtail millet is a versatile crop which can be grown in any season of the year with the shortest crop cycle of 60 to 90 days.

No other food crop can be grown in such a short period. Considering the importance of the millet in Kurnool district, the government has sanctioned a research centre for the district, which is located at Nandyal.

So far, the centre has released new varieties of the millet such as Nallama Korra, Krishnadevaraya, Narasimharaya, Srilakshi and Suryanandi. Srilakshmi, which gave a yield of 14 quintal per acre this year has been popular among farmers.

The duration of Suryanandi was reduced to 60 days which could be accommodated in any season.

The foxtail millet grain is available only in select urban shops at present in ready-to-cook form and is priced at Rs.28 a kg, less than the price of rice.

Other millets of the group such as Arika, Sama, Ooda and ragi are vanishing gradually even from the homes of farmers.

Dr. Narasimha Rao argues that jowar and foxtail millet should be included in the subsidised food scheme to prevent incidence of diabetes.

Kangayam cattle show on February 10

The annual Kangayam cattle show organised by Kangayam cattle breeders society and Senaapathy Kangayam Cattle Research Foundation will be held at Vellakoil on February 10.

Farmers breeding pure Kangayam cattle from the region are expected to attend the show.

Poultry sector sees it as panacea

It wants to be covered under MGNREGS



Just like agriculture, the poultry sector too wants to be covered under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

The suggestion, made by poultry farmers here, is to address the problem of labour shortage faced by the sector. According to them, the wage component can be shared by the government and the poultry sector, ensuring round-the-year employment for the workers.

“Prior to the launch of the scheme, workers used to come to our farms on their own. Now, we have to arrange transportation from far-off places,” State president of the Tamil Nadu Poultry Farmers Association R. Nallathambi told *The Hindu* .

“The cost of labour has also gone up, thanks to the scheme. A woman labourer who was paid Rs. 100 a day earlier is now being paid Rs. 150, while men who got Rs. 200 a day are demanding Rs. 400. Though we are ready to pay them, we are facing labour shortage of 25 per cent.”

By employing labourers from Bihar, the sector has been able to reduce the intensity of the problem. “Our sector is still in need of thousands of skilled and unskilled labourers for various activities, including collecting eggs and loading and unloading feed ingredients,” he says

“While the government is guaranteeing them jobs for only 100 days in a year, poultry farmers can assure work for all the 365 days,” he adds.

weather



New Delhi (Plm)	24	11	0	31
New Delhi (Sfd)	24	9	0	33
Chandigarh	24	10	0	49
Hissar	25	9	0	33
Bhuntar	21	3	0	97
Shimla	13	4	0	119
Jammu	24	9	0	45
Srinagar	13	4	0	59
Amritsar	23	8	0	15
Patiala	25	10	0	25
Jaipur	25	11	0	1
Udaipur	27	14	0	0
Allahabad	25	8	0	0

Lucknow	24	6	0	5
Varanasi	22	9	0	16
Dehradun	24	10	0	119
Agartala	29	16	0	0
Ahmedabad	33	19	0	0
Bangalore	29	14	0	0
Bhubaneshwar	31	17	0	1
Bhopal	30	13	0	0
Chennai	31	19	0	tr
Guwahati	29	14	0	0
Hyderabad	28	18	0	Tr.
Kolkata	25	15	0	12
Mumbai	28	22	0	0
Nagpur	31	14	0	10
Patna	23	11	0	12
Pune	32	16	0	0
Thiruvananthapuram	34	22	0	4
Imphal	28	10	0	0
Shillong	19	8	2	2

The columns show maximum and minimum temperature in Celsius, rainfall during last 24 hours (tr-trace) and total rainfall in mm since 1st January.

Rainfall

RAINFALL: Rain/snow has occurred at isolated places in Jammu and Kashmir and Uttarakhand. Weather was mainly dry over rest of the region.

MINIIMUM TEMPERATURES : The minimum temperatures fell appreciably in Punjab, fell in Haryana, west Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, rose in west Rajasthan and changed little

elsewhere. They were largely above normal in west Rajasthan, appreciably above normal in Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and east Rajasthan and normal in rest of the region. The lowest minimum temperature in the plains was 06.0°C recorded at Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh).

FORECAST VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 05th FEBRUARY 2013: Rain/snow would occur at many places over Jammu and Kashmir and at a few places over Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand during the next 24 hours and increase thereafter. Rain/thundershower may occur at one or two places over Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and west Uttar Pradesh during the next 24 hours and increase thereafter. Weather would be mainly dry over rest of the region.

WARNING: Heavy to very heavy snowfall may occur at one or two places over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand on 4th and 5th February. Thunder squall accompanied with hailstorm may occur at one or two places over Jammu division of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, west Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan on 4th and 5th February.

FORECAST FOR DELHI AND NEIGHBOURHOOD VALID UNTIL THE MORNING OF 05th FEBRUARY 2013: Partly cloudy sky. Light rain/thunderly development may occur in some areas during night. Mist/shallow fog in the morning.

weather

Chennai

Chennai - INDIA

Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

Monday, Feb 4

Max Min

30° | 21°

Rain: 0

Humidity: 83

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 06:34

Sunset: 06:10

Barometer: 1016

Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

Tuesday, Feb 5

Max Min

30° | 20°

Extended Forecast for a week

Wednesday Feb 6	Thursday Feb 7	Friday Feb 8	Saturday Feb 9	Sunday Feb 10
30° 20° Partly Cloudy	26° 23° Overcast	26° 24° Overcast	25° 23° Overcast	25° 22° Overcast

Airport Weather

Delhi

Delhi

Rain: 0

Humidity: 68

Wind: normal

Sunrise: 07:08

Sunset: 06:02

Barometer: 1014



3rd jan 2013

Govt clamps down on movement of imported DAP, complex fertiliser



In a virtual clampdown on imports, the Government has stopped issuing fertiliser movement control orders on all imported di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and NPK complex nutrients from this month.

The move has been triggered by the huge unsold stocks of fertilisers lying both with companies and the distribution chain, following the recourse to large-scale imports undertaken this fiscal and poor offtake from farmers.

Quantitative curbs

While the Government has freed the maximum retail prices chargeable by companies for all non-urea fertilisers, it, however, still regulates how much material is to be sold in different

States. Accordingly, it also decides which company would sell how much quantity. These, in turn, are regulated under the Fertiliser (Movement Control) Order issued every month.

Without obtaining an order, a company cannot avail of the Government's subsidy concession on the material that has been despatched by it. The order, moreover, is applicable on both fertilisers manufactured by the company and imported by it.

"For this month, orders have been issued only for the DAP and complexes being manufactured by the companies. No order is being issued for any new material that is being imported. The imported material can only be kept in the ports and since no subsidy will be paid without a movement control order, nobody will import," an industry source told *Business Line*.

According to him, the Department of Fertiliser has told all companies verbally that it will not issue any movement control orders, without giving in writing though.

imports

During April 2012 to January 2013, fertiliser makers have imported about 58 lakh tonnes (lt) of DAP and another 4 lt of complexes containing nitrogen, phosphorous, potash and sulphur in various proportions.

Indian Potash Ltd has been the single largest importer at 14.44 lt (all DAP), while the erstwhile KK Birla Group companies – Chambal Fertilisers, Zuari Industries and Paradeep Phosphates – together have brought in 15.5 lt of DAP and 1.04 lt of complexes.

The other major importers include Nagarjuna Fertilisers and Chemicals (3.60 lt DAP and 1.84 lt complexes), Mosaic India (4.14 lt DAP), Tata Chemicals (3.23 lt DAP), Gujarat State Fertilisers and Chemicals (3.07 lt DAP), Coromandel International (2.05 lt DAP), Krishak Bharat Co-operative (1.96 lt), the SPIC Group-controlled Greenstar Fertilisers (1.78 lt DAP and 18,700 tonnes complexes), Indo Gulf Fertilisers (1.78 lt DAP), and Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (1.73 lt DAP).

Besides these, DCM Shriram Consolidated (80,000 tonnes DAP), Deepak Fertilisers (41,000 tonnes DAP) and KPR Fertilisers (35,000 tonnes DAP) have imported small quantities.

Inventories

“With some 55 lt opening stocks of DAP and complexes likely on April 1, there is enough material to take care of the coming kharif season requirements. The Government does not want to incur unnecessary additional subsidy burden from fresh imported material. That is probably why they are discouraging imports now,” the source said.

Rising prices

The current unprecedented stock build-up has been due to the erratic monsoon rains that led to poor offtake by farmers. Besides, the prices of de-controlled non-urea prices shot up massively following the Government’s move to cut the nutrient-based subsidy rates on these.

Since Rabi 2011, retail prices of DAP have increased by almost a third, from about Rs 18,200 to Rs 24,000 a tonne, while similarly going up from Rs 12,000 to Rs 17,000 a tonne for MoP. The farm gate prices of single super phosphate has also soared from Rs 4,800 to Rs 7,800 and that of 10:26:26, a popular complex fertiliser, from Rs 16,000 to Rs 22,000 a tonne.

Coonoor tea turnover up for third consecutive week

For the third consecutive week, the turnover of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association has posted an increase.

At Sale No: 5 which ended on Friday, the turnover increased by 2.82 per cent over the previous week, reveals an analysis of the market reports.

Compared to last week, the average prices stood flat at Rs 98.16 a kg. The absorption rate fell to 87 per cent from 88 per cent last week, but since the volume offered was more, 13.37 lakh kg was sold against 13 lakh kg in the previous week.

This was the highest volume sold in three weeks.

Consequently, the overall turnover this week rose to Rs 13.12 crore from Rs 12.76 crore last week.

This meant that in just one week, the turnover gained Rs 36 lakh or 2.82 per cent.

Pakistan was strong for selective grades in the range Rs 90-118 a kg.

The CIS bought for Rs 90-130. There was some purchase for European ports at Rs 92-105.

Quotations held by brokers indicated bids ranging Rs 85-89 a kg for plain leaf grades and Rs 110-150 for brighter liquoring sorts.

They ranged Rs 86-89 for plain dusts and Rs 105-150 for brighter liquoring dusts.

'Coir products can be used in construction and architecture'

Construction and architecture are among the most exciting sectors for coir to explore, offering tremendous opportunities for product diversification, according to architectural experts.

Speaking at an international seminar organised as part of Coir Kerala expo at Alappuzha, they noted the potential application of coir in every aspect of construction – from building roofs to walls to flooring and interior and outdoor decoration.

The Minister for Revenue and Coir, Adoor Prakash pointed out that eco-friendly coir composites can be excellent alternatives to concrete and other non-sustainable building materials.

“Architects must take the lead in devising new uses of coir in construction. New developments in this area are taking place in individual capacity, but we can greatly speed up this process if we put in collective effort,” he said.

P.C. George, MLA and Government Chief Whip, called for finding ways to ensure collection of enough raw material within the State to meet the growing demands of the industry.

This is for the second year in a row that Coir Kerala has held a session on 'Archi-coir'.

V.P. Joy, Principal Secretary (Finance), noted that with wider applications, coir can potentially be a flourishing industry in the micro and small entrepreneurial sector, creating jobs for unemployed youth.

Sajan Pulimoodu, chairman of the Kerala Chapter of the Institute of Indian Interior Designers (IIID), said coir may be unpretentious and modest and long thought of only as a floor mat, but its possibilities are enormous.

Jabeen Zacharias, a leading architect, made a presentation on some of the ways in which coir could be used in building industry – for roofing where it would use less cement and be nearly 50 per cent cheaper than other options such as asbestos; for walls and partitions, for flooring, as beautiful murals and wall mosaics, as furnishings and furniture, as accessories, in gardens as well as in the construction of roads and bridges.

The speakers also urged the government to support more research into coir composites for construction and suggested a nationwide competition to encourage innovation and development of new coir products.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

TODAY FARM NEWS

04.02.2013 A.M

CITU demands Tamil Nadu to provide package for farmers

TRICHY: [Centre of Indian Trade Unions](#) (CITU) in a resolution passed on Sunday has demanded the state government to announce a relief package for the delta farmers affected by the crop failure.

On the third day of the four-day state-level 12th state level conference, the CITU passed a number of resolutions. MLA A Soundararasan, the general secretary of CITU took strong exception to the state government for not announcing the relief package for the drought-hit farmers. The farmers are even more disappointed as Tamil Nadu governor K Rosaiah did not clearly mention about the compensation package to the farmers in his speech in the Assembly a few days ago. The CITU insisted that the state government provide Rs 25,000 for cultivated lands and Rs 15,000 for non-cultivated lands, to each farmer.

A resolution on the atrocities against women was also passed in the meeting. In Tamil Nadu, crimes against women are on the rise. As many as 528 cases of crime against women were booked in Tamil Nadu till October 2012. However, the criminals escaped from the court of law due to the non-implementation of the existing law. The recommendation of the [Verma committee](#) should be implemented to bring end to the crime against women, said Soundararasan.

The conference would end on Monday with a public meeting in the city. CPM MP [Tapan Sen](#), all India general secretary, MP TK Rangarajan, all India vice-president would address the public meeting.

Farmers stop construction work in Greater Noida

GREATER NOIDA: Hundreds of farmers from 39 villages once again disrupted construction work of various [real estate](#) projects in Greater Noida on Sunday. The protests were not only confined to Greater Noida West (Noida Extension) this time, but also [spread](#) to Greater Noida East where sheds of various developers were dismantled by the agitators.

"We held a panchayat at Bisrakh village and decided to halt construction work of each site in Greater Noida (West)," said [Manvir Bhati](#), farmer leader.

Enraged farmers intensified their agitation against builders and the [Greater Noida Authority](#) and dismantled makeshift offices of builders in Greater Noida (West) leading to a brawl between farmers and construction workers. "Despite several warnings, when the labourers at the sites of Amrapali, Gaur City and Ajnara did not stop construction work, the farmers dismantled the sheds," Bhati said.

The drama continued for hours. "Farmers are seeking [resolution](#) of their land-related demands. They told the developers not to resume the housing projects till their demands were fulfilled by the Greater Noida Authority. We feel that as developers are not paying their dues to the Authority, our compensation amounts continue to remain in limbo," Bhati added.

Farmers also threatened that they would lock Greater Noida Authority's office on February 21 if their issues stayed unaddressed. "We are preparing a strong agitation on February 21. We will not let Greater Noida Authority function," said added a farmer leader from Bisrakh.

Scientists from University of Sydney developing heat resistant crops

NEW DELHI: A group of researchers from University of Sydney's Faculty of Agriculture and Environment, led by Dr Daniel Tan, a senior lecturer, are developing heat resistant crops.

According to the [University of Sydney](#), Tan and his team are developing strains of [heat resistant](#)

crops like wheat, chickpea and cotton grown in Australia's grain belt region and are vulnerable to heat stress.

The researchers used field chambers - boxes that simulate heat waves - for their tests.

According to Tan in his article, "Can crops withstand more heat waves" Australia recorded its "hottest day" in the first week of January, and heat waves are becoming more common in Australia. Heat waves are projected to increase in duration and intensity with global warming and climate change.

In the US and Europe heat waves last year resulted in failure of corn and cotton crops. Therefore development of heat resistant crops is becoming increasingly urgent.

"Heat waves can cause major crop failures, such as that of the American corn crop last year after consecutive days of soaring temperatures in the Midwest," said Tan to his university's news.

"Heat means not only a reduction in the amount of crop harvested, but its quality. In wheat the effect of intense heat includes a reduction in the protein quality of the grain that is harvested. In the case of chickpeas they can become sterile when heat stressed," added Tan.

Together with a team of PhD students and international collaborators, Tan has started a program to develop Australian crops that can resist heat by using natural variations in crop genetic collections from around the world.

"We work with countries where these crops originated, for example America for cotton, and institutions where varieties of genetic crop seeds are held," said Tan.

The material is tested for heat tolerance in a range of locations. Wheat varieties are tested in

Australia, Mexico and, because of the potential consumer market there, China.

The tests include searching for cotton varieties which can photosynthesise successfully at high temperatures and chickpea strains that can pollinate in very hot conditions.

"While we are concentrating on crops grown in Australia our work has obvious implications for agriculture worldwide, given the documented trend of rising temperatures. The vulnerability of these crops, which feed millions of people, means our work has global relevance," Dr Tan.

The researchers are looking for naturally occurring heat-resistant variations in crops so they can release them to farmers immediately, without the technical and bureaucratic complexities of producing a genetically modified crop.

In June last year Dr Tan and his team were awarded a \$1.8 million [Grains Research and Development Corporation](#) grant to develop new strains of heat tolerant wheat, concentrating on the northern grain region in Narrabri.

This project uses field chambers - large plastic boxes in which reverse cycle air conditioning simulates a heatwave - to test crops at different stages of development, especially just before pollination and at the flowering stage.

Milk producers in the dock due to stiff competition from Dindigul pvt firm

COIMBATORE: [Stiff competition](#) from a private milk packaging company in Dindigul to companies in Kerala has put the future of [milk producers](#) in the fringes of the Tamil Nadu-Kerala border in the dock.

Over 5000 milk producers in Pollachi, selling milk to private companies in Kerala, are now seeking intervention of the district administration to help bail them out of the situation, as the private companies are now demanding that the milk producers lower the procurement price.

The reason behind this demand is that the private milk company in Dindigul is promoting its milk by giving higher commissions to their agents, while maintaining the cost of milk on a par with other companies, said K Parmasivam, chairman, Thirumurthy Reservoir Project Committee, who is representing the milk producers in Pollachi. As a result the milk companies are facing stiff competition from [Tamil Nadu](#) and they too want to raise the commission given to agents. To facilitate this, these companies are now insisting that the procurement price of milk must be lowered, he said.

The Dindigul company is able to procure milk from the producers at Rs 13 to Rs14 per litre, while selling the milk at the market price of Rs34 per litre in Kerala with the help of agents, who are paid a commission of Rs10. Meanwhile, the milk packaging companies in Kerala procure the milk at Rs 19 to Rs22 per litre and selling it in market at the same price of Rs34, paying their agents just Rs8.80 per litre.

On a daily basis, 50,000 litres of milk is procured by just one company in Chittor, from this part of the state. Now with the competition from Dindigul, the other companies are also planning to give additional commission to agents, but by reducing the procurement cost from the milk producers in Pollachi, Pamasivam said.

He said the production cost of milk has increased due to a rise in the cost of cattle feed and in such circumstances if companies reduce the procurement price, it would negatively impact the milk producers.

Parmasivam further said that Aavin is selling additional milk to Kerala after procuring the milk at a low cost from the milk producers here and this is again affecting the producers selling to private companies. He said the issue has been taken up the Coimbatore collector M Karunakaran, who has agreed to help them. A uniform milk procurement price should be maintained and agents should be paid the same commission, which would reduce the competition, he added.

Groundwater levels nosedive in Andhra Pradesh



Monsoon-dependent groundwater levels in the state have fallen by more than 11 metres in 2012. In 1988, the fall was a mere five metres and in 1998, it fell by seven metres.

Interestingly all this happened despite normal average rainfall in the past two decades.

Sharing the aforementioned with this newspaper, Dr K. Venugopal, joint director of the AP Ground-water Department said that what is more alarming is that perennial resource of groundwater in the state is not only declining but has started drying up.

Observations from hydrographs of more than thousand piezometers reveal that groundwater table has reached critical levels in major parts of rain-fed areas of the state. Rayal-seema region, including Anantapur, Kurnool, Kadapa and Chittoor, is worst hit followed by Telangana and Coastal Andhra. "Hyderabad is witnessing a similar trend wherein sustainability because of heavy demands or over-exploitation with borewells would become a problem," he said adding that in 1982, though scarcity was felt in pre-monsoon periods, trees outlived droughts building groundwater reserves.