

Water level

The water level in Periyar dam was 113.40 feet with an inflow of 105 cusecs and discharge of 105 cusecs on Sunday. In Vaigai dam, the water level was 50.30 feet with an inflow of 77 cusecs and discharge of 60 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 2,721 mcf. There was no rain in the region.

Cotton nets Rs.3, 890 per quintal at regulated market

Cotton has fetched Rs.3, 890 per quintal in the auction conducted at the Regulated Market here on Friday.

According to an official release, District Collector Darez Ahmed, who inspected the market, said the market would help farmers get remunerative prices and prevent middlemen from pocketing the benefits .

The market had been directed to sell agricultural produce such as cotton, turmeric, groundnut, and gingelly, the release said.

Apart from getting remunerative prices, farmers could be sure about the weight too. They could get facilities such as drying yard and godown.

Financial assistance

In addition, they would be able to get financial assistance of Rs.2 lakh by pledging their produce.

The loan is interest-free for the first 15 days and from the 16th day to the end of sixth month, the rate of interest is just five per cent.

All that they have to pay for storing their produce in the market is just 10 paise per bag.

ID card given

For all those agriculturists who sell one tonne of produce or Rs.10,000-worth commodities per annum through the market, farmers' welfare identity card is being given. The card would help them get a free insurance facility of Rs.1lakh.

Udupi's little known chrysanthemum garden



The fragrance of 'sevantige' (chrysanthemum) flowers pervades the village of Hemmady, about 45 km from Udupi. It is a pleasing sight to see the yellow sevantige flowers dance gently to a breeze. Although Udupi district is known for Shankarpura 'mallige' (jasmine), the Hemmady sevantige, as it is called, though equally popular, is not all that well known.

The sevantige is grown roughly on about 150 acres of land at Hemmady and the neighbouring village of Katbelthur. About 200 farmers have been cultivating the flower here. The farmers usually grow three crops of sevantige on three categories of lands. They sow the seeds for the first crop in August, for the second crop in September, and the third crop in October. It takes about six months for the sevantige plants to grow and yield flowers. The flowers of the first crop usually bloom in the second week of January (around January 10).

The farmers take these flowers and sell it at the flower market at Maranakatte village, about 14 km from Hemmady. The sellers from other places, including Mangalore, Karkala, Bhatkal, Kumta, Honnavar, and Shimoga, come to Maranakatte and pick it up. It is a tradition among these farmers to offer a portion of their crop to the Brahmalingeshwara Temple at Maranakatte.

The rates of these flowers are decided by market. On an average, a farmer gets a minimum price of Rs. 80 to Rs. 100 per 1,000 flowers; the maximum could be Rs. 300 or more. "If we get less than Rs. 80 or Rs. 100, it is a loss for us," said Shekhar Ganiga, who grows sevantige on

one acre of land in Hemmady. On an average, nearly four to five lakh flowers are sold daily at Maranakatte from mid-January to April-end. But on three days, January 14, 15 and 16 and on February 13, crores of sevantige flowers are sold here because of festival season. "The sevantige is a winter crop," said Mahabala Devadiga, who grows it on one acre of land.

What makes the Hemmady sevantige so special? "It has its own unique fragrance. Besides sevantige of this kind can only be grown at Hemmady and Katbeltur villages. The quality of soil here is responsible for making our sevantige so special," said Diwakar Kotian, a sevantige flower grower.

Farmers want State to urge Maharashtra to release water from Koyna dam

With water-level in the Alamatti reservoir rapidly depleting, farmers' leaders have demanded that the State government urge the Maharashtra government to release the Krishna water from the Koyna dam.

Farmers' leaders and people's representatives, including Tammanna Hangaragi, vice-president of the Bijapur Zilla Panchayat, have said in a press release that people were bound to face a crisis during summer as water will not be available for both drinking and irrigation purposes.

The reservoir irrigates 6 lakh hectares of land in north Karnataka region. The release said that most of the farmers in the Krishna basin cultivate sugarcane, a water-intensive crop. Without water, farmers will suffer losses.

Drinking water shortage

Places where the multi-village drinking water scheme has been implemented will also face scarcity in the coming days if the Maharashtra government is not urged to release water from the Koyna dam, the release said.

The government must understand the seriousness of the problem and make sincere efforts to address the issue before the situation worsens, it said.

Sources in Krishna Bhagya Jala Nigam Ltd. (KBJNL) said Alamatti reservoir has 41.66 tmcft of water, of which live storage is 24 tmcft. The gross capacity of the dam is 123 tmcft.

For irrigation purposes, water is being released at 7,295 cusecs regularly to the canals and to the Narayanapur dam.

“If the water is released at this rate every day, then the water-level will reach the dead storage level within a fortnight,” sources said.

The reservoir has not received water from the Koyna dam since October.

Some farmers have alleged that releasing water to the Narayanapur dam was unscientific as it was being done to meet the demand of some private industries.

‘Give incentive to young farmers’

T. Krishnamurthy, Head, the Department of Economics, Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheswara College, Ujire, said here on Sunday that the government should provide a monthly incentive of Rs. 5,000 up to five years to graduates who took up agriculture to lure youngsters to the practice.

On the second day of the seminar on ‘areca agriculture and culture’ at Bharathi College, he said the government should provide the incentive under the condition that it would stop providing financial help if they quit agriculture any time during the five years.

If the government provided a monthly incentive, agricultural graduates would be assured of some financial benefit till they settled into farming.

Mr. Krishnamurthy said the children of farmers, particularly areca growers, after their graduation, drifted away from agriculture and looked for other jobs. They wanted to carve out a career in professions such as medicine and engineering and were not ready to take up agriculture.

The professor said that many graduates, who belonged to agricultural families, upon getting employment forgot the fact that income from agriculture enabled them to graduate and pursue other professions. “They are forgetting the ladder they used to reach a higher standing in life,” he said.

Mr. Krishnamurthy said that children of many areca-growing families, which were employed in foreign countries and other parts of the country, were settling down in those areas itself refusing to return to their villages. As a result, their aged parents had to spend the evening of their life in villages without having anyone to care for them. “Their homes in villages are now becoming old age homes,” he said.

The professor said that women of many farm families were not ready to marry men from agricultural families.

The professor said that areca plantations too faced several problems such as a shortage of farm labourers, skilled labourers, and uncertainty in markets. But there was no point in glorifying problems; instead challenges should be faced.

Mr. Krishnamurthy said that Bharati College was organising the seminar to encourage some students to take up agriculture after their graduation.

Many student speakers at a seminar on ‘areca agriculture and culture’ at Bharati College said on Sunday that monkeys caused a huge loss to areca growers. The loss was unaccountable, they said. The speakers said that monkeys ate ripened areca fruits and threw them wherever they liked.

T. Krishnamurthy, Head, Department of Economics, Shri Dharmasthala Manjunatheswara College, Ujire, said that sterilisation of the simian population could help control their menace to some extent.

300 varieties of rice on display at ‘Kempakki Mela’ in Mysore



Popularising them:M. Rechanna, a farmer from Kollegal, and other cultivators explaining the merits of the varieties of rice on display at the mela in Mysore on Sunday.— PHOTO: M.A.

SRIRAM

Fifteen farmer groups from across the State, have displayed over 300 strains of rice cultivated by them at 'Kempakki Mela' here.

The three-day mela will conclude on Monday. It has introduced consumers to the world of paddy hitherto unknown to many whose choice was restricted to polished rice. Krishnaprasad of Sahaja Samrudha, an organisation advocating organic farming and promoting indigenous variety of paddy, told *The Hindu* that change in food habits and growing preference for junk food was driving down the market demand for traditional rice varieties. Hence farmers had come together to protect rice varieties and showcase them to the public, he said.

Medicinal varieties

Karibhatta, Kalame, Karikalave, Sannakki, and so on are popular medicinal varieties and people in the Varada river basin of Sagara and Soraba regions cultivate them. The rice is pounded and mixed with jaggery and consumed as tonic to keep the body cool, said Mr. Krishnaprasad.

Likewise, Karikalave is cultivated in Gulbarga and Bidar and is effective in curing acidity and cold, while Sannakki grown around Sirsi is known for its medicinal value, he added.

Other varieties like Karibhatta, Navara, Sidda Sanna, Rajamudi, Jeerige Sanna, Ratnachoodi, Chinnaponne and Salem Sanna are on display too.

For M. Rechanna, a farmer from Kollegal, production of desi rice is his contribution to preserving the cultural heritage of the country. Mr. Rechanna has 12 varieties of desi rice cultivated on his plot. "These desi varieties such as Salem Sanna, Gowri Sanna, Ratnachoodi or Gandasale do not require fertilizer and hence are eco-friendly. Even water requirement is relatively less and yield varies from 15 to 20 quintals an acre," said Mr. Rechanna, who gave up chemical farming 10 years ago.

Food processing technology clinic

The Industries Department will be organising a two-day technology clinic for agro-food processing industries in the district at the Elite Continental auditorium in Thiruvalla on January 22 and 23.

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, D. Rajendran, District Industries Centre manager, said Mathew T. Thomas, MLA, would inaugurate the programme and Sheela Varghese, municipal chairperson, will preside over the inaugural function.

V.N. Jithendran, District Collector, will deliver the keynote address.

K. Sudheer, Additional Director of Industries and Commerce, will give an introduction to the Entrepreneur Support Programme of the Industries department at the technical session, later.

Prof C.S. Purushothaman, former director of SIES School of Packaging in Mumbai, will talk on various aspects of the packaging concept. N. Anandavally, Food Safety Consultant of the United Nations, will deliver a lecture on various aspects of Food Safety Act and on the 'basic critical hazards analysis in food safety' at 2.15 p.m. on Tuesday. Alex Thomas, Tierra Food India Pvt Limited, will talk on the present trends in the food processing sector. P. Unnikrishnan, Food Safety Officer in Pathanamthitta, will talk on implementation of the Food Safety Act and G. Padmaja, scientist at Central Tuber Crops Research Institute in Thiruvananthapuram, will deliver a lecture on various value-added products of tuber crops on Wednesday forenoon.

Varghese Joy of the Bureau of Indian Standards will talk on ISO and ISI standards and formalities, and K.R. Vipin, Inspector of Legal Metrology, formalities in legal metrology and labelling, later, in the afternoon session.

Sreenish Shenoy of Stallion and System Solutions Pvt Limited in Ernakulam will talk the advantages of Bar-coding and Jacob Thomas Alappatt of Eastern Condiments Pvt Limited will speak on value added products of spices, later.

Poultry industry in State in deep crisis



Poultry industry in the State finds itself in the middle of an unprecedented crisis, thanks to 'exorbitant' rise in prices of feed and absence of commensurate increase in prices of birds and eggs.

Decline in the demand for birds coupled with hike in prices of essential ingredients like maize and soybean has forced farmers to sell the birds at around Rs. 50 a kg against the cost of production of close to Rs. 60 a kg. In addition, reports on occurrence of bird flu in some parts of the country, affected sales significantly, thus crippling the industry.

Andhra Pradesh accounts for production of 3.5 crore live birds every month, which is one-third of the country's production, apart from six crore eggs a day. In revenue terms, poultry's contribution to the State's annual GDP is estimated at Rs. 20,000 crore with employment to close to 20 lakh people.

The first blow to the industry came in the form of hike in the minimum support price of maize from Rs. 980 to Rs. 1,175 a quintal and for soybean, from Rs. 1650 a quintal to Rs. 2,200. "The hike in MSP will translate into abnormal increase in the cost of maize per quintal from Rs. 1,100

to Rs. 1,700 in the open market, close to 30 per cent hike at one go,” AP Poultry Federation president D. Sudhakar said.

This was followed by the export of soya cake in large quantities to Iran, owing to the country's bilateral relations, at prices almost 150 per cent higher than the domestic market. This gave scope for traders to create artificial scarcity and jack up prices of the commodity. Players in the poultry domain claim that the price fell to Rs. 27 a kg at the farm level in the recent weeks and the sale of dressed chicken had fallen to Rs. 80 a kg from about Rs. 120 a kg a couple of months ago.

“This is unviable and resulted in significant erosion of the working capital,” Mr. Sudhakar said.

The situation in the egg market, where the State leads the country, is no better. “The National Egg Coordination Committee has declared price of Rs. 3.35 an egg, but this does not guarantee returns to farmers as the cost of production and overheads is higher than the offer price,” Hyderabad Layer Farmers Association president K. Mohan Reddy said.

Industry players are not hopeful of the situation improving during the current year too. They wanted banks to announce one-year moratorium on repayment of the principal and interest on the loans they had obtained besides rescheduling the loans.

The AP Poultry Federation held meetings with Union Finance Minister P. Chidambaram, RBI Governor Duvvuri Subba Rao and Food and Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar seeking their intervention in recovery of the sector and enhancing working capital limits as there was serious erosion in the amount employed. They also wanted the government to regulate exports and essential ingredients and freeze them at a certain limit.

‘Collaborate to strengthen agriculture’

There should be convergence of the efforts of all the institutions working for the welfare of the farmers, said M.V. Rao, Director General, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD).

Speaking at a seminar on “Futuristic Agricultural Extension for Livelihood Improvement and Sustainable Development” at the Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University here, Dr. Rao extended an open invitation to the scientists of ANGRAU to work in collaboration with NIRD. He

also said that Geoinformatics was an important area which was helping the farmers in raising productivity. Dr. Rao said that rural development is part of our lives and there was no rural development without agricultural development. Though several organisations were working for the benefit of the farmers, the public institutions play a key role in uplifting the farmers, he felt.

V. Nagireddy, Principal Secretary, Panchayat Raj and Vice-Chancellor, ANGRAU in his presidential address said that the Green Revolution was started 50 years ago and we are able to have 80 percent of the food grain reserves now in India. Extension played a vital role in creating awareness to the farmers in various fields, he said.

Extension activities

In his keynote address, K.D. Kokate, DDG, (Agricultural Extension) ICAR, New Delhi highlighted the various extension activities carried out by the ICAR and State agricultural universities through different extension units. He narrated the different production and productivity levels of different farming systems, situation wise in different states.

The Director of Extension and the Chairman of the National Seminar, P. Gidda Reddy also spoke.

A innovative woman farmer Mythili from Ambagipet in East Godavari was felicitated as the best innovative farmer on the occasion. The International journal of extension education and the Asian journal of extension education were also released.

Working model of proposed waterway project unveiled

A working model of the proposed Ganga-Kumari National Waterway Project emphasising the use of flood water for irrigation, power generation and navigation was unveiled at Nagari in the suburbs of Madurai city here on Sunday.

A. C. Kamaraj, member, Interlinking of Rivers Projects and founder, National Waterways Development Project, who had build that model said that Ganga-Kumari Project is a Rs. 5 lakh-crore project submitted to the Inland Waterways Authority of India and the Planning Commission, to form a network of rivers from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.

The project, Mr. Kamaraj claims will provide 15,000-km long waterways operational all through the year for eco-friendly transport by medium ships and boat. Moreover, it could solve the problems of water scarcity for agricultural purpose and also generation of power could be increased which would help the State which is reeling in power crisis.

Explaining how the working model functions, he said that the whole project is based on using flood water and water that gets mixed with the sea.

“This project is called networking of rivers and not interlinking and this could be done with public private participation.”

Former MLA, K. Paaramalai, Madurai District Tiny and Small Scale Industries Association President V. S. Manimaran, P. K. Arumugam, managing director, Chennai Silks, participated in the event.

Dairy meet begins today

The Dairy Development Department, in association with the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA), Kannur, will organise a district-level ‘Dairy meet 2012-13’ at the Dairy Producers’ Cooperative Society, Keezhpalli, near here, on Monday and Tuesday.

A cattle expo will be held on Monday. Nearly 1,500 dairy farmers belonging to 198 cooperative societies are expected to participate in the two-day event, the organisers said at a press meeting here on Saturday.

A seminar on ‘Dairy sector in the modern era’ will be held the following day. Minister for Dairy Development K.C. Joseph will inaugurate the meeting and give away the award to the best dairy farmer in the district. Sunny Joseph, MLA, will preside.

Minister to inaugurate tissue culture lab

Minister for Agriculture K.P. Mohanan will lay the foundation stone for a tissue culture lab building at the District Agricultural Farm, Karimbam, here on Monday.

James Mathew, MLA, will launch the sale of tissue culture plantain at the function to be presided over by district panchayat president K.A. Sarala.

Building cost

Addressing a press conference here on Saturday, Ms. Sarala said the lab building, on 452 sq m, would be completed at an estimated cost of Rs.1.40 crore.

The project, which started in a temporary lab in May 2012, could produce nearly 3 lakh tissue culture plants till date. With the commissioning of the new building and more facilities, it was expected to touch 20 lakh, P.K. Ismail, Farm Superintendent, said.

More crops likely

The price would be Rs.15 per sapling. Currently, the lab produced the Grand Naine and Kochchi Kesel (Nendran Banana) varieties. If found viable, tissue culture production would include more crops, Mr. Ismail said.

UDF wins KAU executive panel

Tenure of committee up to June 2014

The United Democratic Front panel has won the elections held to the executive committee of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) here on Saturday.

The KAU general council meeting elected MLAs Thomas Unniyadan (Kerala Congress-M) and I.C. Balakrishnan (Congress); P.A. Salam of the Indian Union Muslim League; Sony Sebastian (Congress); and Baby Balamprath (Janata Dal-Socialist) as non-official members and Jose Joseph (teachers' representative) to the Executive Committee (Syndicate) of the university.

Vice-Chancellor P. Rajendran chaired the special meeting of the general council.

As many as 38 members of the 49- member council exercised their franchise.

E.K. Mathew, KAU Registrar, was the returning Officer.

The former Executive Committee headed by the Vice-Chancellor consisted of M.P. Vincent, MLA; secretaries to the Government in Finance and Agriculture; and N.V. Nair, representative of the Indian Council for Agricultural Research.

The tenure of the new Executive Committee is up to June 2014.

The general council also constituted statutory subcommittees such as Statute Committee, Assurance Committee, and Accounts Committee.

P.A. Ramanibai will head the Statute Committee while I.K. Raveendraraj and S. Devanesan will be the chairmen of the Assurance Committee and Accounts Committee respectively.

Mary Regina and K. Gireendrababu were nominated to the University Welfare Fund Trust committee.

Gurgaon farmers want their land back



Farmers holding dharna at Garoli Khurd village in Gurgaon on Sunday.

Residents of five villages in Gurgaon whose land was acquired seven years ago by the Haryana Government for setting up of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) by Reliance India Limited (RIL) have been on “dharna” at Garoli Khurd village for over a month demanding that their land be returned as the project has been shelved. Over 2,000 families are learnt to have been affected by the land acquisition.

“The Haryana Government had acquired over 1,300 acre land belonging to five villages- Garoli Khurd, Harsaru, Mohammadpur, Khandra and Narsinghpur- in 2006 for setting up industry and handed it over to Reliance for setting up of SEZ. But now that the SEZ project has been shelved, we want our land back. The Government had paid us about Rs.20 lakh per acre then, but the land prices have now shot up to Rs.8-9 crore per acre along the upcoming Dwarka

Expressway. As per the law, if the project for which land has been acquired fails to take off for five years, it is returned. In this case, it has been seven years and the SEZ failed to take off despite an extension,” said Kamal Singh, a resident of Garoli Khurd, and one of the affected farmers.

The farmers are agitating since December 15.

The SEZ was to be set up through a special purpose vehicle -- Reliance Haryana SEZ Ltd -- created after collaboration between Reliance Ventures, a wholly owned subsidiary of RIL, and the Haryana State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (HSIIDC).

The agitating farmers rued that they were rendered jobless and left with no means to earn their livelihood. “ *Hooda Saheb* (Haryana Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda) had then promised that the SEZ would create lakhs of jobs and other opportunities for farmers. But the promises proved to be hollow. We did not get enough compensation then to start some business and are now forced to work as labourers in factories to earn two square meals a day,” said Nathu Singh, former Sarpanch of Mohammadpur.

Manesar Industries’ Welfare Association founder life member Amina Shervani, who went to meet the agitating farmers along with local Aam Aadmi Party leader Pankaj Gupta on Saturday, assured them of legal help in their fight for their land. “It is shocking that the land acquired by the Hooda Government for industry was first handed over to RIL for SEZ and later zoned as “residential” in the recent Gurgaon Master Plan to be sold to the developers. The farmers are right in their demand for their land and we have assured them of legal help in their fight”, he said.

Farmers allege lathi-charge

Farmers protesting the delay in getting their acquired land back from Madhya Pradesh government said they were cane-charged by police here on Sunday.

They were attempting to reach the venue of an event being attended by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, when the incident occurred.

The farmers protesting at Maharajpur, against the Land Sealing Act tried to rush forward towards the venue waving black flags. Mr. Chouhan was at the venue, launching the Atal Jyoti Scheme under which 24-hour power will be supplied to rural areas.

The agitators also hurled red chilli powder at police when they tried to prevent them, police said, adding a number of policemen sustained injuries to their eyes. Police later arrested nearly 70 farmers for disrupting the peace and sent them to jail.

Farmers have been agitating at Maharajpur for the past month over the delay in getting their land back.

Rogue elephant damages sugarcane field, kills bull

In a freak incident, a wild elephant strayed into the sugar cane field of a farmer on Sunday morning and fatally mowed down a bull while another bull escaped death by a whisker by breaking loose and fleeing the scene in utter panic.

The incident was reported from the Lakshmiapuram village of the Bangarupalem mandal at the Andhra-Karnataka border about 80 kms from here. The elephant trundled into the two-acre cane field and attacked the bulls killing one of them. The farmer who had just then left the bulls on his field after the morning work and returned home saw the other bull galloping back home and returned to the field and found the elephant on a rampage.

He raised an alarm and the villagers came rushing and tried to scare away the elephant by beating drums and bursting crackers. The jumbo finally retreated into the forest, but not before trampling down the entire cane field. Following information the forest officials arrived and are camping at the field just in case the elephant returned. Meanwhile Collector Solomon Arokiyaraj has reportedly asked the RDO, Chittoor to visit the village and submit a report on the loss incurred by the farmer Venkatramana Naidu. The Collector is expected to take up with the concerned officials the problem of increasing wild elephants menace in the district of late and try to address the problem on a permanent footing.

While the central and the western mandals of the tail-end Chittoor district is in the grip of wild elephant menace, Tirupati and the surrounding mandals skirting the dense Bhakarapet and the Seshachalam forest ranges amid which nestles the picturesque Tirumala hills, is experiencing

the problem of the stray panthers, frequently prowling across the Tirumala ghat road, foot-paths and the human habitations in the forest fringe areas of the Tirupati city.

Cashew crops start to wither in Ariyalur

Growers seek better attention from State



no cash here:Ariyalur district has over 34,000 hectares under cashew and thousands of farmers are dependent on the crop.File Photo

It is not only the regular crops such as paddy, sugarcane, cotton and maize that are withering in Ariyalur district but also cashew, which is the backbone of the district's economy. The district has over 34,000 hectares under cashew and thousands of farmers are dependent on the crop.

K. Jayachandran, a cashew farmer from Aandimadam, at the agriculturists' grievances meeting on Friday, pointed out that there were 33,000 cashew orchards in the district, one of the highest in the State. He wanted the State government to accord better attention to their welfare as they determine the economy of the district. "We get only three hours of three-phase power supply, that too only during the day. An equal duration of power supply should be ensured at night too," he pleaded.

R. Ulaganathan of Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam also lamented that even cashew crops were withering in the district due to drought.

Pichapillai, another farmer, warned that the district might have to face serious drinking water problem if the current situation were to continue. "Water problem has already been noticed in the villages," he added. He also pleaded for remunerative price for maize, one of the major crops of the district.

Several farmers demanded deepening and clearing of silt in water sources in the district, especially Pullampadi Canal, Karaivetti Eri, and Sukran Eri, as that alone would be able to help conserve water during rainy season. Though as much as Rs.1 crore was spent on Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme works in a block, not a single water source had been deepened, they alleged.

At the same time, they wanted the district administration to take care of the combined drinking water schemes benefiting the district, especially from the Kollidam.(Thirumanur, Nadhiyanur and Thirumalapadi schemes are serving the district).

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

Farmer holds expo to help students



K K Vijayan is on the breadline. But, that never deterred him from nurturing his passion - farming. It was this passion which prompted the government to acknowledge his painstaking efforts and honour him as the best farmer in 2009 and 2012.

Vijayan's father was a small-scale farmer. Naturally, he inherited the taste and skill which made him realise that it was farming where his heart and soul lay. And, going a step further, he has now started organising exhibition for school children from January 25 to 29.

"This is the third consecutive year that I have been organising exhibitions for the school students. The entry is free. Financial constraints are there, but I am going ahead with it as children can reap benefits out of it," he says. Vijayan says he has invited about 52 schools in the district to his exhibitions which will be held at Thuthiyoor. The highlights of the exhibition will be the display of traditional as well as modern equipment. "Around 20 such equipment will be displayed in the exhibition. Traditional equipments would give them a vivid picture of the past and how agriculture progressed since then," he says.

Apart from cultivating his own land, he has also undertaken farming on leased lands. "After undertaking farming on my 42 cents of land, I thought of extending my activities to leased lands too, which was going quite well too. But of late, I had to forgo some leased land as it has been given away to construct flats," he said.

Though Vijayan was doing his BSC Botany, he could not complete it due to his physical ailments. "I had to undergo a surgery for heart ailment due to which I had to drop my studies. I opted for Botany for I thought it could be of immense help while pursuing agriculture," he said.

Another farmer kills self

Acute water crisis in the delta region claimed one more life in the district on Sunday. Unable to deal with crop loss, a 30-year-old farmer here committed suicide after a drying Cauvery left his samba paddy withered.

R Ramesh of Keluvathur Sothirium village in Tiruvarur district had cultivated paddy on around 3.5 acres, for which he had borrowed money from various sources. Due to the paucity of irrigation water, the paddy started to wither, police said. Following this, Ramesh and his family members reportedly were clueless on how the debts were to be repaid. Unable to bear the mounting financial pressure, Ramesh consumed pesticide on Saturday and was admitted to the Mannargudi GH, where he died. Ramesh has three children.

Doctor gets award for water conservation

The Weekend Leader (www.theweekendleader.com), a Chennai-based news portal that focuses on positive news and features, has chosen Anil Joshi, a 40-year-old ayurvedic doctor

from Madhya Pradesh, as its Person of the Year (2012), for his exemplary work in the field of water conservation.

Joshi led a team of local volunteers and built checkdams in drought-hit villages in his State, which have become lifeline for thousands of farmers in the region. Each dam cost around `100,000 and Joshi had mobilised the funds by collecting one rupee each from the villagers. He had hit upon the idea of building check dams, moved by the plight of farmers at Fatehgarh, a village where he has been having a clinic since 1994. The check dam that Joshi built across the Somli river in 2008 recharged the groundwater table and provided water for irrigation. The 'person of the year' Award function will be held at VIT's Chennai campus on January 24.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

Wheat exports set to top 9.5 mt this financial year



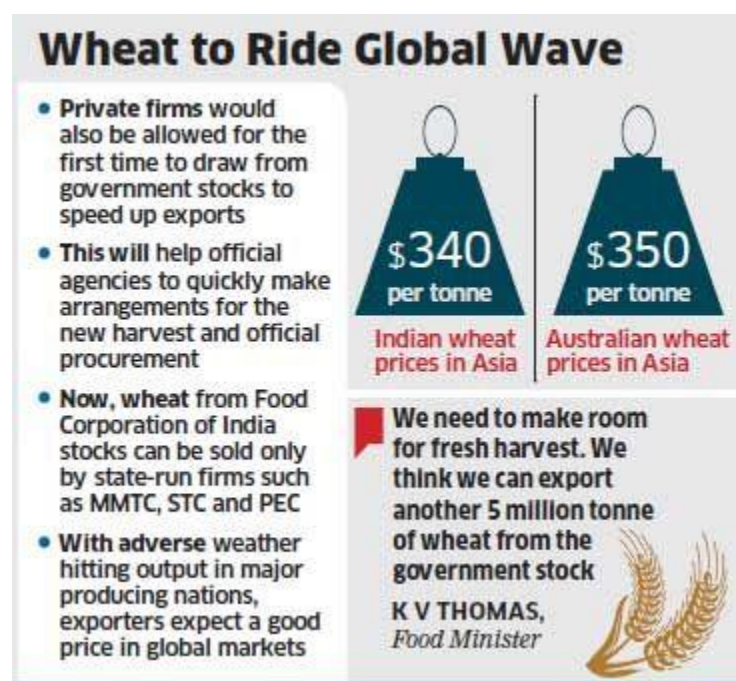
NEW DELHI: India's [wheat exports](#) are poised to rise to a record 9.5 million tonne in the current fiscal year as the government is keen to ship out 5 million tonne from official stocks to make space for the bumper harvest.

Top officials said private firms would also be allowed for the first time to draw from government stocks to speed up exports as official agencies need to quickly make arrangements for the new harvest and official procurement.

With adverse weather hitting output in major producing nations, exporters expect a good price in the international market. The proposal may come up in cabinet agenda on Thursday.

"We need to make room for fresh harvest. We think we can export another 5 million tonne of wheat from the government stock," [Food Minister](#) K V Thomas told ET.

Currently, wheat from the stocks of [Food Corporation of India](#) can be sold only by state-run firms such as [MMTCBSE -1.15 %](#), STC and PEC. "We are working on a mechanism for allowing private players to ship wheat along with PSUs. The process will be transparent so that there is least financial burden on the government," he said.



The country is likely to get yet another bumper crop this year due to favourable weather conditions such as the recent rains in northern India and cold weather since the beginning of this month.

The government expects the output to beat last year's record.

"If such weather conditions continue, we expect to surpass last year's output of 93 million tonne," said agriculture secretary Ashish

Bahuguna.

The demand for Indian wheat has gone up amid a fall in wheat production across Australia and Russia. The government has finalised tender for exporting 2.305 million tonne of wheat as against the target of 4.5 million tonne. Of which, around 1.5 million tonne have already been shipped out.

Now with the proposal of government opening up options for private players to sell government stock, wheat trading houses are expecting good export numbers.

"We are waiting for the government to open the export for private traders. There is a huge stock in the country and we are expecting again a bumper crop of 100 million tonne," said Anil Monga, managing director, [Emmons International Ltd](#) [BSE -4.28 %](#).

According to industry sources, contracts for the new crop for April-May shipment were being signed at \$300-\$330 a tonne. The current demand for Indian wheat was largely coming from Bangladesh, South Korea, the Middle East and African countries.

The government has been able to export the grain at an average price of \$300 a tonne.

"Indian wheat is currently in huge demand globally. We should take full advantage of the situation and export as much as we can," says Pravin Dongre, president, [Indian Pulses and Grains Association](#).

According to agency reports, Chicago wheat gained 5% last week, recording the biggest weekly gain since July as the worsening condition of the US winter crop threatened to squeeze global supplies that have been affected by an adverse weather.

THE HINDU Business Line

[Declare Madurai, Ramanathapuram drought-hit, urge farmers](#)

Madurai, Jan. 20:

At the monthly farmers' grievances redressal meetings held at Madurai and Ramanathapuram, farmers sought their respective districts to be declared "drought-hit" and compensation released for the losses suffered due to monsoon failure.

They urged the respective district administrations to seek adequate relief from the Government as they have been put to hardship, forced to remain not only jobless but also lose out money in the process.

They pleaded an early intervention in the matter and sought a compensation of more than Rs 20,000 an acre.

The Madurai District Collector Ansul Misr responded that the Government had already announced various steps and a team of ministers was evaluating the extent of crop damage in the district.

The officials at the meeting suggested that the farmers could explore the possibility of alternative cropping for which sops are being offered by the Agriculture and Horticulture departments and the water required is minimal

At the meeting held in Ramanathapuram, farmers stated that more than 80 per cent of the paddy crop had withered due to the long dry spell in November and December and failure of the north-east monsoon.

The District Collector K. Nanthakumar assured them that the Government would protect their interests.

The Agriculture Department has carried out preliminary enumeration of damaged crop and a detailed taluk-wise enumeration would be taken up and the exact extent of damage assessed by the end of the month.

Nutrient solution

Having moved forward on reducing losses of oil companies on diesel sales – even if total price deregulation is still far away – the Government next needs to act quickly on fertiliser subsidies. The problem is no less serious on this front, with fertiliser firms being owed Rs 22,000 crore by the Government till December. This is over and above the Rs 65,000 crore it has already provided for in 2012-13. Adding another Rs 11,000 crore of under-recoveries for the current quarter will take the total dues for the fiscal to a whopping Rs 33,000 crore. It is for the Government to decide whether to clear these dues – which would take the total fertiliser subsidy bill to almost Rs 100,000 crore – or allow the industry to bleed the way the oil companies do. Both being undesirable, it leaves the third option of rationalising prices paid by the farmers.

Thankfully, this process can be achieved more painlessly than it was for diesel or domestic LPG, where sharp one-way price hikes are seemingly the only way out. In the case of fertilisers, the entire problem can be traced to just one product: urea. Its farmgate price has been raised only marginally – from Rs 4,830 to Rs 5,365 a tonne – since April 2010, when the rates of all

other fertilisers were decontrolled. These have, as a result, gone up 3-4 times even with fixed nutrient-based subsidies: From Rs 9,350 to Rs 24,000 for di-ammonium phosphate (DAP) and from Rs 4,455 to Rs 17,000 for muriate of potash. It has also led to farmers sharply cutting down on their consumption. Companies alone are now holding an estimated 1.1 million tonnes (mt) of DAP and 0.9 mt in their godowns. Besides, there is another 2.6 mt of DAP and 1.9 mt of complexes lying with the trade, which farmers are not lifting. This is happening even as urea is being black-marketed, reportedly at Rs 7,000 a tonne or more.

The solution is, therefore, blindingly simple. The Government should straightaway raise the retail price of urea by Rs 5,000 a tonne. It could soften the adverse political impact of this through a higher subsidy on non-urea fertilisers, enabling them to be sold cheaper by Rs 1,500-2,000/tonne. Farmers will, then, be forced to consume less urea and apply more of other fertilisers, thereby improving crop yields through better soil nutrient balance. Since India imports over a quarter of its urea, which also accounts for more than half of the country's fertiliser consumption, the above price rationalisation can deliver both fiscal and foreign exchange savings. Given the large inventory of DAP and complexes with the industry/trade, the Government could even consider limiting the subsidy on imported fertilisers, which will additionally help cool down global prices. The present fiscal and foreign exchange crisis can well be turned into an opportunity for rationalisation of the fertiliser subsidy regime to benefit the Government, industry and, not the least, the farmer.

High volatility continues in pepper market



Kochi, Jan. 20:

The pepper market continued to witness the tug of war between bull and bear operators last week. As a result the market has been highly volatile with the prices moving up and down at the whims and fancies of the operators. It was being artificially brought down as the fundamentals were not supporting such an action.

From the current trend on the futures market one could come to the conjecture that the shortage is being reflected on the futures deliveries which were being artificially kept low in recent days.

Arrivals has not picked up yet. The weather conditions last week were not favourable for harvesting in many of the growing areas.

Much of the material arrived was from Pathanamthitta, Kollam and Thiruvananthapuram districts and quality of which used to be slightly inferior to the high range pepper.

During the Pongal, there was some improvement in the arrivals at the terminal market. But after the holidays demand from Tamil Nadu was significantly high. The pipelines in the upcountry markets are said to be empty. Hence, the demand from those regions is strong, they said.

Strengthening of rupee against the dollar and rise in prices has pushed up the Indian parity in the international market substantially and therefore Jan and Feb prices are not competitive with other origins which are at around \$7,000 a tonne.

TN demand

However, Mar is competitive at \$6,750 . But, the exporters are said to be not in a position to make any offer fear of availability and the uncertainty in the price movements. Jan was at \$8,100 and Feb at around \$7,100 .

Meanwhile, following re-opening of the Tamil Nadu markets after the Pongal holidays, dealers from there are aggressively covering from the high ranges. They were even ready to buy good quality pepper from the farmers directly at Rs 400 a kg, they claimed.

This phenomenon has squeezed the arrivals at the terminal market now. On Saturday only 20 tonnes of fresh pepper arrived and 25 tonnes were traded at Rs380 Rs 390 and Rs 400 depending upon the quality, bulk density and area of production. Domestic dealers bought it.

Feb delivery shot up last week while the nearbys have shown a decline, albeit marginal. Feb increased by Rs 1,495 a quintal to Rs 37,475 while that of Mar and Apr dropped by Rs 30 and Rs 215 respectively to Rs 34,735 and Rs 34,100 .

turnover dips

Total turn over dropped by 792 tonnes to close at 11,417 tonnes. Total open interest declined by 123 tonnes to 3,321 tonnes.

Spot prices increased by Rs 800 on strong demand amid limited supply last week to close on Saturday at Rs 38,500 (ungarbled) and Rs 40,000 (MG 1) a quintal.