

## **Rs. 2.11 crore assistance sanctioned to farmers**

The State Government has sanctioned Rs. 2.11 crore to the district for purchase of farm equipment as part of its agriculture mechanisation programme.

In a statement, Collector C. Samayamoorthy said the Department of Agricultural Engineering, which was supplying farm equipment to farmers at nominal rates to offset the lack of manpower, was conducting the demonstration of the equipment in various places to popularise them among the farmers.

In addition to understanding how to operate the newly introduced farm equipment, the farmers realised the need to mechanise their operations to make them simpler and more effective.

The State Government has allotted subsidized assistance of Rs. 2.11 crore for purchasing equipment such as power tiller, weeder, sprayer, paddy saplings transplanter, harvester and cutters.

Interested farmers may contact Assistant Executive Engineer, Agricultural Engineering Section, Tractor Road, NGO 'A' Colony, Tirunelveli, or the Assistant Executive Engineers at Cheranmahadevi and Tenkasi. Applications should be filled in all respects and submitted along with necessary enclosures such as copy of land documents, patta, family card to get the assistance.

## **Seminar on millets**

A seminar on the importance of millets will be organised at the Rang Mandir in Bidar on January 29.

The district unit of the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Zahirabad, Andhra Pradesh-based Deccan Development Society are jointly organising the seminar.

Resource persons DDS secretary P.V. Sateesh, K. Bhavani from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Nirmala Yenagi from the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, will speak about economic and nutritional importance of millets.

The speakers will take questions from farmers, KRRS district unit president Vishwanath Patil Koutha said in a release.

He urged the government to provide cash incentives to farmers growing minor millets on the lines of Andhra Pradesh.

### **Kids' wear going the organic way?**

The demand for organic clothing made from non-allergic, eco-friendly and durable organic cotton for children, is on the rise in the country with people becoming more aware on health and environmental issues, an industry expert has said.

“The popularity of organic kids’ wear is growing as mothers are more aware and are worried about the impact of chemical dyes on the baby’s skin. Used over a period of time the chemicals used in conventional cotton clothing stick to the skin of a baby,” said Deepak Agarwal, CEO of Gron Stockholm, a key organic kids’ wear brand sold in the country.

India is one of the largest producer of organic cotton in the world after overtaking Turkey and accounts for almost 51 per cent of the global organic cotton production.

Agarwal said organic cotton is grown in the country without using chemical manure and is dyed using safe chemicals as per the Reach Law of the European Commission.

The majority of organic cotton produced in India is processed in the country and exported only as textile. The demand for the product within the country is negligible, mostly because of its high price.

But it is gaining ground in the country as it is relatively unaffected by the recession which has hit the developed markets.

Organic cotton causes less soil and water contamination and preserves and promotes biodiversity and soil fertility.

The health hazards of farmers growing organic cotton are far fewer.PTI

### Three-day study tour to promote organic farming

Farmers urged to make optimum use of help being extended by various agencies



for rich yield:Board member, TNAU, K.R. Arjunan interacting with farmers at Horticulture Research Station in Udthagamandalam on Monday. —Photo: M. Sathyamoorthy

As part of an ongoing programme to promote sustainable agriculture and horticulture in the Kookalthorai watershed with emphasis on organic farming being implemented by the Horticulture Research Station (HRS) under the Hill Area Development Programme , a three-day study tour was flagged off on Monday.

The head, HRS, N. Selvaraj, said that 50 farmers from various parts of the Kookalthorai watershed including Kookalthorai, Seegula, Athikambai and Kambattykambai are part of the study tour, which will cover Mysore, Bangalore, Hosur, Sathyamangalam and Mettupalayam. The objective is to enable farmers to get a first-hand feel of organic farming in various places.

The Eco Agri Research Foundation, Mysore, the International Competence Centre for Organic Agriculture, Bangalore, the TVS Organic Farm, Hosur, the Sathyamangalam Vermicomposting Farm and Navaneetha Krishnan Organic Farm, Mettupalayam, would be among the places the farmers will visit.

It would hasten the process of switching over to organic farming in different parts of the Nilgiris where indiscriminate use of pesticides has played havoc with the soil and the environment.

He added that two more batches comprising 50 farmers each from the Kookalthorai watershed would be sent on study tours soon.

Interacting with the farmers before flagging off the tour, board member, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), K.R. Arjunan said that it is high time farmers switched over to organic farming which can guarantee high returns and a healthy lifestyle.

He urged the farmers to make optimum use of the help being extended by the TNAU and other agencies.

### **Ban on export of poultry products comes to an end**

The three-month ban on export of eggs, chicken and other poultry products from India that was imposed by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) came to an end on January 26.

Exporter bodies and top officials of the Union Government's Animal Husbandry Department (AHD) initiated action to resume export to countries that have imposed the ban.

The OIE imposed the ban after the outbreak of the highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1 (bird flu) at the Central Poultry Development Organisation at Hesarghatta in Karnataka was confirmed on October 26, 2012. "We are expecting an official note from OIE on Monday," said secretary of the Livestock and Agri Farmers Trade Association Dr. P.V. Senthil.

He told *The Hindu* that for the first time the AHD had come forward to extend its support to the poultry sector by making a representation to the countries that imposed the ban on poultry products from India based on the OIE norms. "Some countries have not lifted the ban for over six years while the ban period according to the OIE is only three months. We have given a detailed account of whom to contact in 12 countries including eight countries that were already importing eggs from India in a bid to reopen those markets. This includes the Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates (Dubai, Jebelali, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ajman), Kuwait, Qatar, Iraq, Iran, China and Kazakhstan.

“Four new countries that are potential buyers of Indian eggs to whom we have asked the AHD officials to make a representation are Pakistan, Mauritius, Japan and Jordan. We were waiting for the ban to come to an end. The officials concerned said that they will make the representation to the above said countries in a week,” Dr. Senthil added.

Poultry farmers and exporters in Namakkal Zone, which accounts for 95 per cent of India’s eggs export, said that lifting the ban would greatly benefit them with good rates for the egg.

### **‘e-Sagu’ gives taste of IT to farmers**

An innovative ‘e-Sagu’ programme introduced by the Centre for Good Governance offered the taste of information technology (IT) to farmers in Kurnool district.

The programme, which was being implemented in Kurnool, Karimnagar and Warangal districts, was executed by the IIIT. Prof. Krishna Reddy of the IIIT was named the principal investigator of the programme.

The programme was introduced on a pilot basis in six mandals - Nandyal, Panyam, Banaganapalli, Mahanandi, Bandi Atmakur and Gadivemula. In each mandal, five villages were identified covering 10 farmers in each village.

A coordinator appointed for every two mandals takes the pictures of the crop right from sowing to harvest to present to the agriculture scientist to know the crop condition and incidence of pests. For each crop, around 40 to 50 observations are made during the period.

The coordinators are tuned to take pictures in such way that incidence of pests is highlighted. The scientist, who examines the pictures, gives a brief write-up on the pest or disease as well as remedies.

Dr. G. Narasimha Rao, former Associate Director of Research at Agriculture University, was named the senior agriculture scientist in Kurnool district. The recommendations are displayed in each village to help the owners of the plot as well as give information to others who suffered from similar problems.

Dr. Narasimha Rao said the response to the programme was good from farmers who frequently interacted with the expert. Chemical spraying was recommended only after the disease load exceeded the threshold limit.

According to his experience, in majority of cases the crops suffered from either sulphide injury or zinc deficiency.

The problem was rectified with simple steps like drying of the field or spraying of zinc. For other pests also, low-cost remedies were suggested. Usually farmers relied upon the suggestions of pesticide dealers and spent a huge amount with no result.

### **Kiran calls for affordable biotech products**



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The tenth edition of BioAsia began here on Monday with Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy urging entrepreneurs and scientists to ensure that biotechnology products were within the reach of common man.

Spain is the Partner Country at the event being attended by more than 500 delegates from 45 countries, including pharmaceutical giants, regulators, research scholars and trade experts. 'Biologics and Biosimilars' is the main theme of the three-day conference. A CEO Conclave and Regulators' Meet from different countries are scheduled to be held during the event.

Mr. Reddy presented Genome Valley Excellence Awards 2013 to Pfizer Inc., USA, and M.K. Bhan, former Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, during the inaugural function. Freda C. Lewis-Hall, Executive Vice-President, Chief Medical Officer, Pfizer Inc. accepted the award. The Chief Minister said the biotech companies would have to compete with the best in the world to stay in the business, while ensuring that prices were competitive. "That's where R&D will help you," he added. Referring to agri-biotech, Mr. Reddy said there was a need for a second green

revolution. Besides ensuring an increase in productivity, remunerative prices must be ensured for farmers.

Ms. Carmen Vela Olmo, Minister of State, Research Development & Innovation, while touching upon the science and technology cooperation between India and Spain, invited biotech companies and researchers from both the countries to participate and bring their respective collaborations to a higher level.

She also announced that three projects selected for funding under the Indo-Spanish joint programme for technological cooperation in biotechnology.

In her key-note address, Ms. Freda Lewis-Hall said the golden age of bio-pharma was ahead in which Asia could thrive. She said that focus should be on therapeutics and quality in the model of innovation in drug development.

Earlier addressing the media, Dr. Bhan called for developing human resources in clinical science at different levels, adoption of best practices and an effective regulatory system in the country for conduct of clinical trials. He said the emerging countries would have to play a big role towards drug development and that too at affordable prices.

### **NABARD calls for intensive conservation of water**

Plans on to construct check dams, recharge and village ponds at a cost of Rs.1.65 crore



A view of Kanoothu dam in Manapparai taluk, Tiruchi district. File photo

: National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has called for intensive water and soil conservation/harvesting efforts in some blocks and other promotional efforts in Tiruchi district.

In its Potential Linked Credit Plan, the bank points out that the Cauvery is the most important river in the district irrigating 52,125 hectares. Besides, there are 75 system tanks and 99 seasonal/rainfed tanks that cover 5,751 hectares and 9,164 hectares. Net irrigated area in the district is 99,082 hectares.

The main source of irrigation is canals, open wells, tanks, and tube wells. While canals irrigated 41,573 hectares, wells irrigate 53,063 hectares, and tanks 4,446 hectares.

Besides, Agricultural Engineering Department plans to construct check dams, recharge ponds, and village ponds at a cost of Rs.1.65 crore during the current financial year.

However, NABARD says the uncertainty and limited availability of water in canals underlines the need for creating awareness on economic use of water. "Water use efficiency is to be taught through larger demonstrations preferably involving whole village."

At the same time, it points out that the number of check dams, divers or small reservoirs is inadequate to control water at times of heavy inundation. As energisation of pumpsets in the district takes generally three years, it has suggested popularising tatkal scheme for prompt energisation.

Besides, there are several tanks requiring renovation, repairs, and clearing of silt which can be undertaken with the assistance of the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund from NABARD.

The bank says the district has an irrigation intensity of 108 per cent. Groundwater irrigation is widely distributed covering all blocks and surface water source is restricted to Thottiyam, Musiri, Andanallur, Lalgudi, and Pullambadi blocks.

The available sources of surface water have been fully exploited in the district and hence the emphasis is shifting towards development of available groundwater in a scientific manner. Groundwater development forms major part of minor irrigation programmes and includes construction of dug wells, dug-cum-borewells, filter points, and shallow tube wells.



The bank has pointed out that only Andanallur, Pullambadi, and Thiruverumbur blocks could be called “safe” because the groundwater utilisation is up to 70 per cent. As Lalgudi and Marungapuri are found to have 70-90 per cent utilisation, they have been deemed “semi-critical”. But nine other blocks – Manapparai, Musiri, Thathaingarpet, Thuriayur, Uppiliyapuram, Manikandam, Thottiam, Vaiyampatti, and Manachanallur – are deemed “over-exploited” because the utilisation is more than 100 per cent. With specific reference to Manapparai, Marungapuri and Thathaingarpet, it said that these blocks do not have canal irrigation and farmers depend on rainfall tapped through borewells, tubewells, and dugwells. Successive draft of groundwater depletes the water table fast. “Hence intensive water and soil conservation/harvesting efforts are required.”

NABARD wants banks to understand and appreciate the need for supporting small irrigation systems, including solar-based ones, and extend credit to deserving farmers for installing pipeline systems and setting up water conservation measures, by extending adequate and timely credit.

At the same time, it has requested the State government to take appropriate measures to arrest the “alarmingly dwindling” levels of groundwater by evolving an agricultural system that economises on water and maximizes value from water.

Suggestions include recycle and reuse of water, promotion of crop diversification, adoption of integrated farming system, use of very small local-level irrigation, promoting rainwater harvesting structures, and extensive use of water saving devices, and improve and repair canal irrigation system.

“As investment for borewell/dugwell is very high and involves greater risk, the State government may consider evolving insurance scheme/failed well compensation scheme at least in backward/dry areas,” it has suggested.

**Your favourite Rajamudi may soon be pricier**



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It's not just polished rice that has become expensive. Traditional varieties, available mostly in organic food outlets here, have also seen a rise. The bigger fear for traders is that supply could be severely disrupted in the coming months due to a sharp decline in production.

Failure of rain and the resultant drought have led to a decline in production of dryland and rain-fed paddy varieties, pushing up the prices of popular traditional varieties such Rajamudi and Gandasale.

“The price of Rajamudi, which was between Rs. 40 and Rs. 42 a kg a month ago, is now hovering between Rs. 48 and Rs. 65 at different outlets. Similarly, Gandasale, which was between Rs. 50 and Rs. 55, is over Rs. 64 a kg,” B. Somesha, chief executive officer, Sahaja Organics, told *The Hindu*. According to him, Ratnachudi and Salem Sanna, the other two popular varieties, have also seen a rise.

### **Decline in production**

While traditional dryland paddy varieties such as Doddabairanallu, Puttabatha and Mundga, mostly grown in Bangalore, Ramanagaram, Kolar and Mandya districts have seen a decline in production by more than 75 per cent; rain-fed varieties such as Buddabatha, Jolga, Sannavalya, Karijeddu and Dodgya, mostly grown in Dharwad, Haveri, Uttara Kannada and Shimoga districts have declined by about 50 per cent in production, farmers claim.

It is estimated that about 15 tonnes of Rajamudi, nearly 3 tonnes of Gandasale and about 8 tonnes of organic Sona Masuri are sold in Bangalore across various outlets in Bangalore. Besides, about 5 tonnes of red rice and smaller quantities of Ratnachudi and Salem Sanna are also sold.

Hoysala S. Appaji, a Rajamudi farmer in Holenarasipura, said: “Yield of Rajamudi has come down drastically due to non-availability of water. The mill price of Rajamudi has gone up from Rs. 27 to Rs. 31 a kg and we expect it to cross Rs. 40 shortly.” He, however, lamented that though the retail price had gone up, the farmers were not getting the benefit as their margins remain low or did not meet production cost. “We grow rice even if it is a loss because paddy gives good fodder for our cattle and assures our food security.”

## Weather the culprit

But in the case of another farmer at Shikaripura in Shimoga, B.N. Nandish, who cultivates traditional varieties of Chikkasanna and Ratansagar, the early setting of cold weather and prevailing dry winds has resulted in loss of crop for him even though water was not a problem in the area. "Major loss has been witnessed in Ratansagar, and Chikkasanna crop has also been damaged."

Mr. Somesh said in the light of declining production, the retail cost of traditional rice could rise in the coming weeks and some varieties may run out of stock.

## You're cooked if State doesn't impose rice stock limit on mills, traders



In a bid to check the dizzying price rise of the staple, the State government may limit the stock in hundreds of rice mills and wholesale dealers across the State to prevent hoarding.

Consumers have been alarmed by the price shooting up in recent weeks amid reports of the cereal making its way to neighbouring States which too are facing the heat.

"The Union government withdrew State governments' powers to limit stocks of foodgrains a few years ago; the Karnataka government had, last October, sought restoration of the power as far as rice is concerned," a source in the Food and Civil Supplies Department told *The Hindu*.

The source, who didn't want his name published, said: "The Union government has already restored the power. This is the only measure we can take to curtail spiralling rice prices as [right now] cross-border movement and export of rice cannot be curbed." If the government imposes a limit on stock, hoarders will be forced to bring their stock into the open market, thereby bringing down the prices, the source said. "It is not just individual consumers who are affected by the hoarding and price rise; even wholesale traders too are crying themselves hoarse over the abnormal increase." Rice export, inter-State movement and crop shortage this season are said to be the main reasons for the spiralling prices. With the prices having increased by about 25 to 30 per cent during the last one month of different varieties of Sona Masuri, the standard Sona Masuri, popular among the middle class, has touched an indigestible Rs. 46 to Rs. 48 a kg. While the cheapest variety, steam rice, is being sold at Rs. 40 to Rs. 42, the premium Bullet Rice has touched Rs. 57 in the retail market.

### **Inter-State movement**

With neighbouring Tamil Nadu facing production shortfall, the staple cereal is finding its way there, causing shortage in Karnataka. Some quantity is even going to Andhra Pradesh, another big producer facing shortage.

Removing restrictions on export not only made India the top rice exporter, but it also pushed up domestic prices. Sources in the Agriculture Department said at least farmers are getting a good price because of this. Paddy, sold at Rs. 16 a kg a few months ago, is sold at over Rs. 21 at present, sources said.

Another major reason, according to Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president, Bangalore Wholesale Foodgrain Merchants' Association, is crop failure during the last sowing season due to drought and farmers leaving their land fallow this season because of lack of irrigation facilities. Also, whoever has rice stock, may not be selling it, expecting to get better prices when the shortage peaks, he stated.

### **Ragi price too**

The drought has also impacted ragi, the common man's staple in southern Karnataka. This humble, hardy millet now costs Rs. 34 a kg as against Rs. 22 last month, Mr. Lahoti added.

## Food park to come up in Mysore



The Central Food Technological Research Institute (CFTRI) plans to set up a food park in Mysore to provide a one-stop solution to food producers and manufacturers, said institute Director Ram Rajsekharan here on Monday.

The park will provide guidance, undertake analysis of food quality and explore the possibility of helping with licensing, he said at the Food Safety Forum 2013 meet, organised by the Centre for Sustainable Development to create awareness on the Food Safety and Standards Act (FSSA) – 2006. The sessions were on the Act and issues and challenges that the industry faces.

### Working at it

“We are still working on the modalities of the park, which is expected to come up by the end of this year,” he said, adding that the food standards followed in India were mainly taken from standards set abroad that suit the Caucasian people and not that of Indians.

“These standards are not suitable for the Indian body structure and has to be changed,” he said.

The forum, comprising the Indian Institute of Management-Bangalore (IIM-B) and the National Dairy Research Institute (NDRI), will conduct seminars and talks for food traders and consumers on food safety issues in the coming days.

Information, statistics and implementation of the FSSA, cleanliness in small and medium restaurants, safety concerns for mass food preparation units such as Akshya Patra scheme, safety issues for street-food vending, safety issues in the food industry, production of ingredients, dairy, meat and bakery industries, were discussed.

## Measures needed

Lalitha R. Gowda, Chief Scientist at CFTRI, said: “Because of the immense cultural diversity in the country, there is no one particular kind of food style that is accepted everywhere. Safety is the primary concern because of the changes in food style as a result of globalisation, increase in use of processed food and also an increase in consumer awareness.”

“Pesticides, toxic materials, drug residues, natural toxicants, additives and added colours are just a few of the invisible issues that cause harm through food materials. So safety measures should be taken not just by the industry but also by farmers and consumers,” she added.

## Agriculture distress main reason for farmers' suicide, says study



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Distress in agriculture, compounded by the lack of water to save standing crops, resulted in the suicide of some farmers in Cauvery Delta districts, according to a study.

The South Indian Coordination Committee of Farmers Movements (SICCFM), which studied the circumstances in which seven farmers died, said four of them committed suicide, and distress in agriculture was the major reason behind the suicides.

S. Kannayan, coordinator of the SICCFM and Jayaram Venkatesan, an independent researcher, who visited the families of all the seven farmers, said the farmers had committed suicide as they had come to the conclusion that “they had run out all options and lost hope to lead a life with dignity.”

They said two farmers had died following a heart attack and had not committed suicide as claimed by the media. “But their families said they were in a state of distress due to non availability of water for the standing crop. Another farmer died in an accident,” the report prepared by the SICCFM stated.

The SICCFM team found there was heavy demand for portable oil engines; hiring an engine and fuel would cost Rs. 200 per hour.

“Two farmers — Raajangam and Abdul Rahim — who committed suicide were upset that they could not afford the cost,” SICCFM said.

One of the important findings of the SICCFM was that six of the farmers had borrowed money from private lenders at interest rates varying from 24 to 60 per cent per annum.

Calling upon the State Government not to be in denial mode about the deaths, SICCFM urged it to accept and understand that the farmers had taken the extreme step because of farm related issues.

“The government should formulate suitable relief and rehabilitation measures,” it said.

### **Fear of failure drove farmer's son to ace CA**

Ever since he got to know that he cleared the chartered accountancy finals in the first attempt, 23 -year-old M. Gnana Sampath has been itching to go home.

“I can't wait for my people to say, 'auditor vandhaachu,'" says the all-India third-rank holder who hails from Pogalur near Coimbatore.

“There are barely three or four graduates there. My parents do not even know what a CA is. But that is the place that taught me to take education seriously,” he says.

“At a very young age, I was sent to Ellapalyam where my grandparents live, because at Pogalur I had to walk up to 3 km and then travel by bus for an hour to reach school,” he says.

Gnana Sampath hails from an agricultural family and says his father wished for him to study so he wouldn't have to depend of farming.

“We were completely dependent on well irrigation. A few years ago, when the fields dried up, our life collapsed. We have been living on my father's savings since then,” he says.

Last week, when Gnana Sampath told his parents he scored 593 marks and secured a national rank, his mother had one thing to say, "Don't roam around much on a bike. There is too much traffic in Chennai."

"My parents have barely studied up to class VIII, but my uncle, a B.Com graduate, was an accountant with the RBI. He was my hero. Though I was interested in science, I chose the commerce stream to break the circle of poverty," he says.

Gnana Sampath pursued B.Com at PSG College of Arts in Coimbatore. "Everybody there wore good clothes and spoke great English. I was extremely shy for the first couple of years. But later, I learnt to mingle," says the student who has already cleared Cost and Works Accountancy. He underwent a rigorous schedule when he moved to a mansion in Chennai a few years ago.

"I tried to manage with as little money as possible because I was dependent on my father. I got Rs. 7,000 as stipend but that was not enough in a city like Chennai," he says. The day began as early as 6 a.m. with classes, after which he would spend all day at ICAI in Nungambakkam preparing, and then go to evening classes.

His room has just the bare essentials and the TV is plugged off. "Fear of failure kept me focussed. I didn't want to spend more money. It is time I gave my parents some relief," he says.

His peers speak highly of him. "He is very dedicated. Even in class, when asked a question, he would wait for others to answer. When everybody gave up, he would softly give out the right answer," says his roommate Nagasabarish who hails from Pollachi.

Gnana Sampath is also an inspiration for him, he says. "It is by looking at him and learning from him that I cleared my CA finals in the first go this year," Nagasabarish says.

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## weather

Chennai

### Chennai - INDIA

#### Today's Weather



Partly Cloudy

**Tuesday, Jan 29**

**Max Min**

29° | 22°

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 89

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 06:35

**Sunset:** 06:08

**Barometer:** 1015

#### Tomorrow's Forecast



Partly Cloudy

**Wednesday, Jan 30**

**Max Min**

30° | 20°

#### Extended Forecast for a week

**Thursday**  
**Jan 31**



31° | 20°

Partly Cloudy

**Friday**  
**Feb 1**



25° | 24°

Overcast

**Saturday**  
**Feb 2**



25° | 23°

Overcast

**Sunday**  
**Feb 3**



25° | 23°

Overcast

**Monday**  
**Feb 4**



25° | 23°

Cloudy

#### Airport Weather

Delhi

**Delhi**

**Rain:** 0

**Humidity:** 94

**Wind:** normal

**Sunrise:** 07:11

**Sunset:** 05:57

**Barometer:** 1017



### Rising onion prices sure to make you cry

Inadequate rain during the last monsoon continues to affect vegetable prices in city. Onion prices have shot up in the wholesale and retail markets following reduction in supply, say traders.

Onions, which were selling for Rs14 per kilogram in the wholesale market two weeks ago, are now priced between Rs.18 and Rs. 20 per kg. In the retail market, the price has risen from Rs. 20 to Rs. 25 per kg.

“We received fewer loads of onions from Nashik last week and the stocks are getting exhausted. This has led to shortage, and the consequent price hike,” said Ashok Karpe, wholesale trader at the Agriculture Produce Market Committee (APMC) in Vashi. “The rainfall was inadequate in onion-producing areas of Nashik, Pune, Ahmednagar etc., adversely affecting productivity. Very few villages received good rainfall.”

“The prices will remain high in February. We will then have new arrivals from Pune which will help increase the supply and bring down the prices. As of now, nothing can be done to improve the situation,” Karpe said.

Retailers say they have no option but to increase the prices in tandem with wholesale markets. “When we buy a bag of 10 kg, at least 1 kg comprises rotten onions, which again pushes the price up,” said Rajesh Gupta, a vegetable vendor from sector 9, Vashi.

“The cheaper onions priced at Rs25 are the wet ones which do not last beyond a couple of days. The good quality ones sold at Rs25 last for over a week,” he said.

Consumers say the government needs to take measures to control price hike. “How are we supposed to afford basic necessities? The costs of other vegetables too have gone up. How does the government expect the common man to survive?” asked Santabai, a housewife.

23<sup>th</sup> jan 2013

## Rice market turns bullish on lower inflow



The rice market continued to witness an uptrend with prices of aromatic and non-basmati rice moving up by Rs 50-200 a quintal on Monday.

Amit Chandna, proprietor of Hanuman Rice Trading Co, told *Business Line* that following restricted arrivals and rising domestic demand, aromatic and non-basmati varieties remained in focus..The market sentiments are still positive, he added.

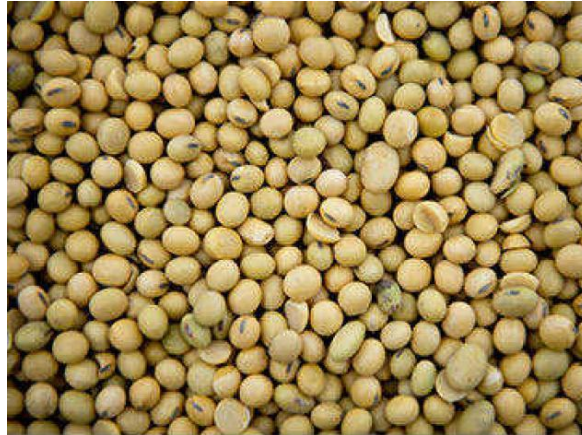
In the physical market, Pusa-1121 (steam) went further up by Rs 100 at Rs 7,500 while Pusa-1121 (sela) improved by Rs 75 and quoted at Rs 6,475.

Price of pure basmati (raw) increased by Rs 50 and quoted at Rs 8,550. Duplicate basmati (steam) traded Rs 200 up at Rs 6,200-6,300. After witnessing a rally last week, Sharbati varieties ruled flat. Sharbati (steam) quoted at Rs 4,800-4,900 while Sharbati (sela) was at Rs 4,600.PR-11 (sela) increased by Rs 50 and sold at Rs 2,700-2,800 while PR-11 (raw) was quoted Rs 125 up at Rs 2,800-2,850. Permal (raw) sold at Rs 2,250 a quintal while Permal (sela) went for Rs 2,200. For the brokens of pusa-1121, Dubar quoted at Rs 2,800, Tibar sold at Rs 4,000 while Mongra was at Rs 2,400.

About 1,000 bags of PR variety sold for Rs 1,260 ; 3,000 bags Sharbati were quoted at Rs 2,120.

One thousand bags of DB went for Rs 2,900-2950. About 5,000 bags of Pusa-1121 arrived and quoted at Rs 3,500.

### **Speculators keep soyabean oil firm**



Speculators' involvement kept soya oil prices firm in Indore mandis on Monday even as demand in soya oil remained weak at a higher rate.

On Monday, soya refined ruled at Rs 720-25 for 10 kg, while soya solvent at Rs 690-95.

However, soya oil is up Rs 5, even as demand in soya refined and solvent continues to be weak at higher rates.

Even though the Malaysian palm oil market was closed today, weak projections and profit taking at higher rate dragged soya oil prices in the futures.

On the NBOT, soya refined February contract closed lower at Rs 729.20 for 10 kg after opening at Rs 734.50 in the morning.

Similarly on the NCDEX, soya oil futures traded lower with its February and March contracts closing at Rs 725.70 (down Rs 3.90) and Rs 703 (down Rs 7.65).

Soyabean on the other hand ruled flat on weak demand in soya DOC and slack buying support from the plants.

On Monday, soyabean in State mandis ruled at Rs 3,160-3,250 a quintal (down Rs 20 from last week) amid arrival of 1.25 lakh bags.

Plant deliveries in soyabean also ruled firm at Rs 3,300-3,350 (up Rs 50-70 from last week).

Notwithstanding bumper crop of soyabean this year which is expected to be around 126 lakh tonnes, soyabean is ruling higher, with stockists building inventories.

This is evident from decline in release of soyabean in the mandis by the traders and farmers; against an output of 126 lakh tonnes, only 60-65 lakh tonnes have been offloaded in mandis.

In futures, soya seeds declined on profit booking at the higher rate with February and March contracts of soyabean on the NCDEX closing at Rs 3,245.50 (down Rs 7) and Rs 3,154.50 (down Rs 28) respectively.

Soyameal continues to rule sluggish on slack demand with its price on the domestic market on Monday being quoted at Rs 26,500-800, while it was Rs 28,000-28,500 on the port.

### **Sugar stockists keep away from buying**

Sugar prices ruled steady at all levels on Monday on routine arrivals, dispatches and volumes.

On the Vashi wholesale sugar market, due to need based retail demand stockists preferred to keep away from bulk buying.

Naka and mill tender rates were also steady as there were no sale tender on Saturday evening due to national holiday.

Domestic futures extended their bearish trend losing Rs 3-4 a quintal till noon. Mill prices were expected to be Rs 10 lower in the evening. The moral was slightly weak, said traders.

Higher production in southern States diverted eastern and southern demands there. In local market, retail demand was routine since Diwali and the market witnessed higher arrivals from producers who have increased pressure on prices in spot and futures, a source said.

On Monday, in the Vashi market, arrivals were higher at 63-64 truckloads (each 100 bags) and local dispatches were 59-60 truckloads.

According to traders, inventory stocks in the Vashi market is currently about 100-110 truckloads. On Friday evening, only 4-5 offered tenders and about 7,000-8,000 bags (each of 100 kg). Monday evening, mills tenders were expected at Rs 3,100 -3,170 (Rs 3,110-3,180) for S-grade and Rs 3,230-3,280 (Rs 3,240-3,280) for M-grade.

**On the National Commodities and Derivatives Exchange**, sugar prices for February futures further declined by Rs 3 to Rs 3,192 (Rs 3,195); March dropped to Rs 3,232 (Rs 3,234) and April was Rs 3,290 (Rs 3,294) till noon.

**The Bombay Sugar Merchants Association's spot rates:** S-grade Rs 3,236-3,321 (Rs 3,236-3,321) and M-grade Rs 3,316-3,452 (Rs 3,316-3,451). **Naka delivery rates were:** S-grade Rs 3,200-3,250 (Rs 3,200-3,250) and M-grade Rs 3,250-3,400 (Rs 3,250-3,400).

### **Pepper falls on selling pressure**

The pepper market fell on reports of selling pressure in the high ranges on Monday as operators cued by the report pulled the market down. Consequently, all the active contracts closed much below the previous day's closing.

Activities were limited as is evident from the fall in turnover. It remained volatile in almost all the sessions. February delivery opened on a firm note at Rs 38,170 a quintal and traded with volatility and moved up to Rs 38,200 a quintal in the opening session itself. Thereafter, prices started sliding throughout all other sessions.

### **High volatility**

At the beginning of the closing session, it touched the lowest price of the day at Rs37,115 a quintal, down by Rs1,085. Throughout the closing session, trading was volatile and the last traded price was at Rs37,310 a quintal. However, the last half-hour average was recorded at Rs 37,315 a quintal.

Total arrivals from primary markets today stood at 35 tonnes and the entire quantity was sold out at Rs 385 to 405 a kg, depending upon the bulk density, moisture content and area of production, market sources said. More and more pepper is likely to come. But, non-availability of skilled workers to pluck the spikes is hampering harvesting, they added.

February contract on the NCDEX decreased by Rs 870 a quintal to close at Rs 37,315 a quintal. March and April dropped by Rs 420 and Rs 15 respectively a quintal to close at Rs 36,525 and 35,310 a quintal.

### **Turnover**

Total turnover fell by 695 tonnes to close at 2,095 tonnes. Total open interest declined by 144 tonnes to close at 3,127 tonnes.

February open interest decreased by 185 tonnes to 1,143 tonnes while that of March moved up by 50 tonnes to 1,400 tonnes. April dropped by 15 tonnes to 435 tonnes.

Spot prices in tandem with the Futures market trend fell by Rs 300 a quintal to close at Rs38,800 (ungarbled) and Rs40,300 (MG 1) a quintal.

Indian parity in the international market was at \$8,000 a tonne (c&f) at spot prices for Jan prompt shipment while February was at \$7,200 a tonne (c&f) and Mar at \$6,750 a tonne (c&f). Vietnam is reportedly offering 550 GL at \$6,500 a tonne and 500 GL at \$6,000 a tonne.

### **Boosting organic farming vital for cutting fertiliser subsidy'**



With the formalisation of Rahul Gandhi's number-two position in the Congress party, his "guru" in politics and Congress General Secretary Digvijaya Singh's stake is also high. Singh, who recently chaired discussions on "socio-economic challenges" in the party's *Chintan Shivir* in Jaipur, talked to *Business Line* on the recent policy decisions of the United Progressive Alliance Government. Excerpts:

How did party workers in the Chintan Shivir respond to measures such as FDI in retail and virtual decontrol of diesel prices?

India has one of the lowest tax-GDP ratios in the world. How this can be improved without hitting the poor is a challenge before us. Look at Azim Premji's recent statement that there is a case for taxing the ultra rich. If the ultra rich can be taxed without hurting investment, it should be considered by the Government.

Measures like the Goods and Services Tax is a promise we have made and this would not only help the trade and industry but also the Union and State Governments to improve their tax-GDP ratio.

FDI by itself can create hundreds and thousands of jobs in retail and the Government has rightly made it mandatory on all investors to source 30 per cent of their products within India, which, I think, is a very good decision.

The UPA-II's last Budget will be presented soon. What are your expectations?

I think we should look at two or three issues. For example, the garment industry has the highest employability. Unfortunately, the taxation introduced last year has made it difficult for them to compete with countries like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, South Korea and China. I think some kind of a taxation policy should be there to encourage the garment industry so that it can compete in the international market.

Also, 60 per cent of the people are dependent on agriculture and farm-related employment. We cannot ignore them. We have to improve productivity. Simple farming is not viable. The Government will have to look at non-farm employment in rural areas.



There is also a suggestion that small and marginal farmers should be paid under the MGNREGA to work on their own farm lands, which may be a good idea. We will be happy if these things get reflected in the next Budget.

Despite measures like waiving loans, farmer suicides are continuing. About 16 farmers committed suicide in Vidarbha this month. Do you expect urgent measures to address this problem?

Why are the farmers committing suicide? One reason is that they make big investments in digging tube-wells and because of no efforts for recharging of groundwater resources, these wells go dry and the investment made goes waste.

Most of the suicides are taking place in cotton-growing areas. Bt Cotton has done well in certain areas. Total dependence on the genetically modified seeds, particularly in States where not enough attention has been paid to monitor them, is another reason for suicides. The high cost of chemical pesticides is another issue. I have not seen any farmer doing organic farming committing suicide. If we use organic manure, organic pesticide and indigenous seeds, there is no investment.

Most of the suicides that are taking place may also be because of the wrong cropping pattern. I think we should look at the prospect of making organic farming more popular.

Instead of complaining about the high cost of petroleum products, petroleum-based urea and GM seeds, India should be looking at improving indigenous seeds and promoting organic farming along with popularising biogas.

We have to think globally, but act locally. How best we can use international research under local conditions is our biggest challenge. If the Government supports this, it will reduce energy and fertiliser subsidies.

In your home State, Madhya Pradesh, the BJP Government will face elections this year on the back of increased foodgrains production and better remuneration to farmers. How will you counter this campaign?

This is incorrect. My charge is that the higher agriculture production that is being shown is based on the minimum support price (MSP) operation for paddy and wheat. Most of this wheat and paddy is the recycling of the PDS (ration) wheat and rice. There have been a number of cases, one in my own constituency, where people who did not have land, 400 quintals of wheat was purchased in their name in the MSP operation. I am not sure that the growth in agriculture that they (BJP) are showing is correct. The point is, it has to be visible on the ground. One should look at mandi arrivals... It is not showing there.

### **Tea prices up at Coonoor sale on lower offerings**



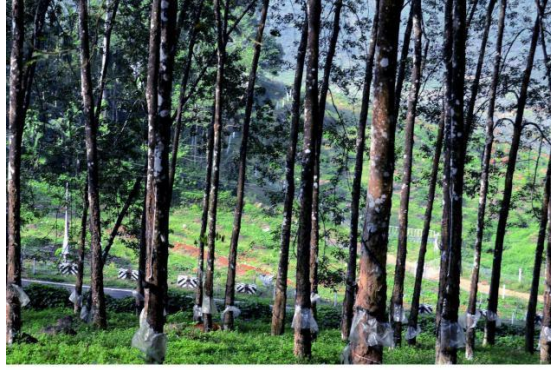
Increased absorption at higher prices helped the turnover of Sale No: 4 of the auctions of Coonoor Tea Trade Association which ended on Friday to rise over previous week.

Although the volume offered had fallen to 14.77 lakh kg from last week's 16.36 lakh kg, a higher volume could be sold because 88.06 per cent was absorbed this week against 70.07 per cent last week. In all, 13 lakh kg was sold against last week's 11.46 lakh kg.

The reduced offer pushed up the price to an average of Rs 98.17 a kg from last week's Rs 97.53. As the demand was firm, more tea was absorbed despite price hike.

Consequently, the overall turnover this week rose to Rs 12.76 crore from Rs 11.18 crore last week. This meant that in just one week, the turnover gained Rs 1.58 crore or 14.13 per cent.

### **Spot rubber unchanged on lack of buyers**



Spot rubber closed unchanged on Monday. Another weak closing in the domestic futures and the absence of genuine buyers kept the commodity under pressure during the day.

But the prices sustained at the existing levels as growers continued to hold their produce expecting better rates in the long run.

“The market is almost deserted and inactive,” an observer said.

Sheet rubber ended steady at Rs 159 a kg, according to traders. The grade slipped to Rs 159.50 (160) a kg both at Kottayam and Kochi, according to the Rubber Board.

The February series weakened to Rs 156.93 (158.96), March to Rs 159 (161.21), April to Rs 162.50 (164.47), May to Rs 164.15 (168.42) and June to Rs 167.97 (170.22) a kg while the July series remained inactive on the National Multi Commodity Exchange.

RSS 3 (spot) dropped to Rs 176.38 (177.06) a kg at Bangkok.

The February futures declined to ¥ 293.4 (Rs 174.46) from ¥ 296.7 during the day session and then to ¥291.5 (Rs 173.34) in the night session on Tokyo Commodity Exchange.

**Spot rates (Rs/kg):** RSS-4: 159 (159); RSS-5: 153 (153); Ungraded: 147.50 (147.50); ISNR 20: 155 (155) and Latex 60 per cent: 105 (105).

### **Girijan coffee co-op bags Citibank prize**

The Girijans of Paderu in Visakhapatnam agency (tribal) area in the eastern ghats have won the Citibank Community Enterprise of the Year award for sustainable commercial cultivation of coffee. The Small and Marginal Tribal Farmers Mutually Aided Cooperative Society of Paderu,

formed in 2007 as a coffee processing and marketing enterprise, has brought about a change in the socio-economic conditions of the region by creating a steady source of income to its members.

Currently, more than 11,000 farmers are part of the co-operative. In addition, 35 local tribal youth are employed full-time in the co-operative and many women get wage employment at the co-operative's coffee processing unit.

The co-operative has diversified into agro-forestry with a focus on reviving the eco-system. Under this programme – Hariyali –the community has planted the 2 millionth sapling recently. “The best part is the community is following up on the plantation and taking care to nurture the sapling till it grows into a full fledged tree. In case any plant withers away it is replaced by another one and its growth monitored,” according to David Hogg, the chief sustainability officer of Naandi Foundation, working with the tribals in this project.

David Hogg and the Naandi Foundation leveraged their networks to get the Livelihoods Group to fund the project. The carbon sequestration by the agro forestry project earns carbon credits to the community. This is sold to multinationals who fund the project.

Pramit Jhaveri, CEO of Citi India, said the Citibank award was presented to the representative of the society by US Ambassador to India Nancy J. Powell at a ceremony in New Delhi recently.

The farmers' collective is planning to increase the membership base and attain organic certification for all of them and also increase the per acre income from coffee plantation from the present Rs 6,250 to Rs 31,250, Hogg added.

### **Wheat output at nearly last year's record level**

Wheat output is likely to be close to last year's record level of 93.90 million tonnes and conducive weather in the next two months is crucial for better yields, Agriculture Secretary Ashish Bahuguna said on Monday.

He also said that the final food grains production estimate for last year would be revised upward by less than one per cent from the earlier estimated all-time high of 257.44 million tonnes.

“I am hopeful of achieving last year’s wheat output level. Gains in crop yields would depend on good weather in February-March,” Bahuguna told reporters on the sidelines of an event here.

The country was able to achieve a bumper wheat crop in the 2011-12 crop year (July-June) as crop yields rose due to conducive weather during February and March, he added.

Asked if production would be affected due to a lag in wheat sowing so far, Bahuguna said, “Sowing of major rabi crops including wheat is almost over now. Wheat area is down by 0.4 lakh hectare as compared to last year. If you compared with average acreage in the last five years, the area coverage is higher by 4.1 lakh hectares. There is nothing to worry”.

According to official data, area sown under wheat has declined to 294.98 lakh hectares so far in the current rabi season, from 295.93 lakh hectares in the year-ago period.

Rabi (winter crop) sowing starts from October onwards and harvesting begins from February-end. The government has kept a conservative production target for wheat at 86 million tonnes for the current year.

On other rabi crops like coarse cereals, pulses and oilseeds, the Secretary said, “Sowing of most rabi crops is over now. Rabi production looks as good as last year”.

States like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are likely to be affected as area under rabi crops are lower, while Karnataka, Rajasthan and Gujarat (which suffered drought during Kharif season) are doing well, he said.

During the rabi season of the 2011-12 crop year, the country had produced a record 127.50 million tonnes of foodgrains. The target for the current year’s rabi has been kept at 120.5 million tonnes.

As far as pulses and oilseeds are concerned, Bahuguna said: “We are doing well, especially in chickpea (chana) and mustard seed. Frost damage in mustard seed is insignificant”.

Sowing of crops like wheat, rice, maize and oilseeds like soyabean are taken up well by farmers as market for these commodities are developed, he said.

However, the same is not the case with minor oilseeds like sunflower and cereals like jowar and bajra, he observed.

Overall, rabi crops have been sown in 592.02 lakh hectare so far compared to 591.56 lakh hectare at this time last year.

### **Foodgrain output may touch 250 mt on better rabi harvest**



Despite the erratic monsoon, the country's foodgrain production in the current crop year may touch the targetted 250 million tonnes (mt). "We are aiming for 250 mt this year. Though total foodgrain production cannot be the same as last year the kharif output is seen better-than-expected," Agriculture Secretary, Ashish Bahuguna, told reporters.

Last year, the country's food grain production stood at 257.44 mt with record rice output of 104 mt and wheat at 94 mt.

Bahuguna said wheat production this year is likely to be closer to last year's level, while mustard and chana crop are looking good. The impact of frost hurting the mustard crop recently would be negligible, he said.

In its first advance estimates, the Agriculture Ministry had forecast a 10 per cent drop in kharif output at 117.18 mt, due to erratic monsoon and it expects to revise the numbers soon. The kharif output in 2011-12 stood at a record 129.94 mt.

Current rabi crops such as wheat and maize are doing well, Bahuguna said. However, the size of wheat output would be largely decided by the temperatures in February and March, Bahuguna said.

The Agriculture Secretary maintained that certain crops such as sunflower, jowar and bajra were facing stress. Rice transplantation was at a sluggish pace due to the poor availability of water in states such as Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, he said.

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TODAY FARM NEWS

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## **Foodgrains output may be lower than last year: Farm secy**

India's overall foodgrains production in the 2012-13 crop marketing year that will end in June is expected to be around 250 million tonnes, around 9 million tonnes less than last year's revised output of almost 259 million tonnes because of low production during the kharif sowing season.

However, production of wheat during the ongoing rabi harvest season is expected to near 2011-12 harvest of around 94 million tonnes, Agriculture Secretary Ashish Bahuguna told reporters on the sidelines of a event here.

As per government's first advanced estimate, foodgrains production during 2012-13 kharif season is expected to be almost 9.8% less than the kharif production of 2011-12 because of uneven southwest monsoon in most parts of the country.

Sowing for the kharif season starts around June and the harvest takes place around September-October, while sowing of rabi crops starts around October and the harvest takes place from end February-March. "I am hopeful of achieving last year's wheat output level. Gains in crop yields would depend on good weather in February-March," Bahuguna said.

He also said that the final foodgrains production estimate for last year (2011-12) would be revised upward by less than one% from the earlier estimated all-time high of 257.44 million tonnes. Officials said it could be raised up to 259 million tonnes.

The country was able to achieve a bumper wheat crop in the 2011-12 crop year (July-June) as crop yields rose due to conducive weather during February and March, he added.

Asked if production would be affected due to a lag in wheat sowing so far, Bahuguna said, "Sowing of major rabi crops including wheat is almost over now. Wheat area is down by 0.4 lakh hectare as compared to last year. If you compared with average acreage in the last five years, the area coverage is higher by 4.1 lakh hectares. There is nothing to worry".



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However, the same is not the case with minor oilseeds like sunflower and cereals like jowar and bajra, he observed. Overall, rabi crops have been sown in 592.02 lakh hectare so far compared to 591.56 lakh hectare at this time last year.

### **Post-harvest fish wastage leads to Rs 15,000 crore loss**

The post harvest fish wastage leads to annual losses worth over Rs 15,000 crore in India's marine and inland fisheries sector, according to an analysis by apex industry body The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (Assocham).

Assocham analysis reveals that poor post-harvest fish handling infrastructure in major maritime states in India leads to wastage of about 25 per cent of the total fisheries resources, which is worth over Rs 61,000 crore.

The post-harvest losses are generally caused due to poor handling, processing of fish leading to quality deterioration arising out of biochemical and microbiological spoilage, inadequate packaging, marketing malpractices and lack of proper storage facilities.

“These losses result in potential income loss to fishermen community and all the stakeholders, traders, processors, involved in fishing related ancillary operations as the spoiled, physically damaged fish fetches 20-25 per cent lower price compared to the best quality catch,” Assocham secretary general, DS Rawat, stated in a press release on Monday.

Assocham has suggested the government to modernize existing harbours and establish more cold storage facilities and factory vessels to aid the fish and marine industry.

Besides, improved methods of fish handling and preservation facilities on-board fishing vessels must be provided through joint ventures for production and marketing of value-added fish products.

“Maximum care should be taken while catching, storing and handling of fish to avoid any damage to the catch as it would go a long way in improving the quality of India’s marine products,” Rawat added.

### **Sugar up 0.15% on increased demand**

Sugar futures for March rose by Rs 5, or 0.15%, to Rs 3,239 per quintal in 13,770 lots.

At the National Commodity and Derivatives Exchange, the February contract edged up by Rs 4, or 0.13% to Rs 3,199 per quintal in 42,590 lots.

Fresh positions created by speculators, rise in demand from bulk consumers supported the trade.

Ongoing wedding season triggered the uptrend.

However, ample stocks following higher supplies in the physical market restricted the rise.

**Maharashtra govt should be ashamed of farmers' suicides'**

NAGPUR: Newly elected BJP president [Rajnath Singh](#), on Monday, paid obeisance to RSS founder K B Hedgwar at the 'smriti mandir' at Reshimbagh. However, he couldn't meet senior RSS leaders as they were not present at the headquarters.

Earlier, speaking to reporters soon after his arrival, Rajnath accused Congress-led UPA government of "dilly-dallying" over the formation of Telangana state.

Singh said that the government is not making its strategy, on the issue of separate Telangana state, clear. "The government should make up its mind as to when and how it will create Telangana," he said.

The centre has put on hold the long-pending Telangana issue after union minister [Sushilkumar Shinde](#) sought more time to hold consultations with the stake holders.

Criticizing UPA government on the issue, he said that the centre's move shows that [Congress](#) is not committed towards granting statehood to Telangana.

On the crisis in Karnataka following the resignation of 13 BJP MLAs, he asserted that the government would continue to remain in majority and there is no crisis. BJP government would complete its term, he added.

On the Democratic Front government in Maharashtra, Singh said that it is a shame for the [state government](#) that thousands of farmers have committed suicide because of agrarian crisis.

