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## Sericulture farmers threaten agitation

R Vimal Kumar

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*Oppose move to reduce anti-dumping duties for import of raw silk*

*'Availability of Chinese silk at low prices will hit cocoon market'*

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Tirupur: A wide section of farmers engaged in sericulture in the district have come out in open against the proposed move by the Centre to reduce the excise and anti-dumping duties for import of raw silk to satisfy the need of weavers in the country.

"The plan, if got implemented, will severely affect the growth prospects of sericulturists in the country and even threaten their professional existence in the long run," Udumalpet Mulberry Growers Association (UMGA) president M. S. Vasudevaramkumar told *The Hindu*.

He said that informed sources had indicated a possible reduction of about 10 per cent on the excise duty from the present slab of 30 per cent. The anti-dumping levy imposed by the Directorate of Anti- Dumping was a measure to protect the domestic farmers by means of a fiscal mechanism that any country exporting silk to India should not fix a price lower than the production price in the exporting country as well as importing country.

### Cocoon market

L. Ramaraj, a leading mulberry farmer in the district, opined that availability of Chinese silk at very low prices would have a cascading effect on the domestic cocoon market as well. The mulberry growers in the district, according to Mr. Vasudevaramkumar, will have to resort to agitation if the Centre goes ahead with the proposed move to satisfy the weaving community ignoring the farmers altogether.

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## Raising certain medicinal plants highly rewarding: expert

Special Correspondent

VILLUPURAM: Cultivation of a medicinal plant termed gloriosa superba (kanvazhi kizhangu in Tamil) will be quite a rewarding proposition, according to P. David Raja Beula, Assistant Director of Horticulture Department, Thiruvannainallur.

In a statement released here Mr. Beula stated that the horticulture department had demonstrated that through precision farming the species would give substantial yield and income.

### Ready markets

The medicinal plant had ready markets as pharmaceutical firms and dealers would procure the seeds at the farmers' door steps. He pointed out that Mukkayi raised the plant in her farm at Ogiyur near here and harvested 600 kg of seeds from one hectare and earned a net profit of Rs.5 lakh.

Overwhelmed by the outcome other farmers in the area too had evinced keen interest in the plant and therefore he along with the officials of the horticulture department had visited the village and explained to them the advantages of raising the medicinal plant by adopting precision farming system.

Those interested can contact Mr. Beula over mobile number 94862 85704 or through E-mail: microeconomicsdavid@yahoo. co.in.

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### Mettur level

The water level at the Mettur dam stood at 83.23 feet on Sunday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 537 cusecs and the discharge 4,000 cusecs.

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### Farm appliances distributed

Minister for Highways and Minor Ports M. P. Saminathan distributed farm appliances worth Rs. 5.09 lakh to farmers at Muthur near Tirupur recently.

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## Courses in food production

The Small Industries Product Promotion Organisation (SIPPO) is offering courses in food production from Monday (January 18).

Those who have studied up to Standard eight and in the age group of 18 to 35 are eligible to apply, said a release.

The three-month course is open to both men and women. For more details, contact 52 Travellers' Bungalow Road, Mahaboobpalayam, Madurai 625 016. Telephone: (0452) 260 2339 or mobile no: 98420 73219.

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## Nothing fishy about this one

Liffy Thomas

*Demand on the rise for ornamental fish*

— Photo: S. Thantoni



***Treating a pet: A fish health consultant tending to a sick fish.***

CHENNAI: S. Vasudeva Rao and his family swear by their two-year-old flowerhorn fish kept in their three-foot tank. The family still recalls how upset members were when the fish fell sick and was treated at a local clinic for a week.

Though their 'pet' recovered, Mr. Rao says his average monthly expense for upkeep of the fish has increased from Rs.200 to Rs.600 now.

"The medicines, food comprising a special diet and occasionally live fish, among others, are my major expense. It is a costly hobby but then the pleasure it brings to every member at home makes it worth it," says the employee of R.R. Donnelley.

Fish keeping as a hobby may have been prevalent for decades but the kind of interest and time many individuals have started giving it is on the rise.

From being an element of décor, a well-kept aquarium is an ideal way to get rid of blues, say hobbyists. Many others say fish is a good pet as they are silent, easy to

maintain and a delight to watch.

Chennai's climatic conditions could be the other reason why the ornamental fish industry is an important market. Adding to the demand is the entry of exotic varieties from other countries and increased interest in Vaastu/Feng Shui fish, which has resulted in people going any extent for care and upkeep of a good aquarium.

V. Rajaraman calls himself a 'fish health consultant' who on an average treats around 20 patients (read fish) a day, especially during October and January. Owners of varieties such as flowerhorn and arowana are his major customers.

"When we started the clinic, we had doubts if we would get people. Luckily, there are many aquarists who are so passionate that they are ready to spend for the long life of the fish," says Mr. Rajaraman of Raj Aqua Clinic, whose 10-day treatment varies between Rs.650 and Rs.1,500.

Some hobbyists, however, are against the concept of such centres coming up and think it is lack of adequate knowledge that is driving them for such paid services.

Indian Aquarium Hobbyist, for instance, through its online forum engages many like-minded people to answer queries on the art of maintaining a good aquarium. Similarly, S. Kishor Prabu, an employee of Ford, says he runs the fish hobbyist community on Orkut.

"We receive around 20 queries a week asking about maintaining a fish tank and other issues," he says.

However, many agree that the aquarist industry is still at its primitive stage and largely unstructured.

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## **Water level**

MADURAI: The level in the Periyar dam on Sunday stood at 116.80 feet (full level 136 feet) with an inflow of 220 cusecs and a discharge of 925 cusecs. The level in the Vaigai dam was 52.66 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 391 cusecs and a discharge of 310 cusecs. The combined Periyar credit stood at 3,243 mcft.

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**Over 3,200 poultry culled in bird flu-hit Murshidabad district**

Murshidabad

Bird flu

Over 3,200 poultry birds culled

NEW DELHI/KOLKATA: Over 3,200 poultry have been culled in bird-flu hit Murshidabad district of West Bengal, a health ministry official said.

A three-member rapid response team from the central government has already reached the state.

"Culling of birds has started and so far 3,209 birds have been culled," a central health ministry official said here Sunday.

"A Central Rapid Response Team of the health ministry has been deputed to assist the state health authorities. Containment measures have been initiated as per the contingency plan," the official added.

The surveillance activities have started in a 3 km radius of the flu-hit blocks. Out of a total population of 40,266 (spread over 23 villages), 36,514 has been covered.

Though 19 cases of fever have been reported among the people of the region, authorities said none of them had any exposure to sick or dead poultry.

The central health ministry also said that the state government has adequate stock of oseltamivir medicine and personal protective equipment (PPE).

A fresh outbreak of bird flu was reported in West Bengal's Murshidabad district Jan 14.

**Fish can remember things for months: Scientists**

PTI, 16 January 2010, 05:31pm IST

LONDON: Australian scientists have claimed that fish can remember things for months, dismissing the myth that the aquatic animals have three-second memory.

According to the researchers at the Charles Sturt University, the traditional view that fish lack the brain power to retain memories is "absolute rubbish".

"Fish can remember prey types for months. They can learn to avoid predators after being attacked once and they retain this memory for several months. And carp that have been caught by fishers avoid hooks for at least a year," lead author Kevin Warburton said.

"That fish have only a three second memory is just rubbish but nobody knows where the three-second myth comes from," Warburton was quoted as saying by The Telegraph.

Ashley Ward, a fish biologist at Sydney University, said: "It seems to come from an advert many years ago, but nobody is sure what it was for."

Fish can also learn to improve how to catch food, said Warburton, carry out acts of deception and modify their behaviour, for example, in reef environments cleaner fish who eat parasites off 'client' fish act on best behaviour when they spot a larger patron.

Warburton said: "What's fascinating is that they co-operate more with clients when they are being observed by other potential clients. This improves their 'image' and their chances of attracting clients".

The team came to this conclusion after studying the behaviour of Australian freshwater fish.

### **'Copenhagen could mean end of Kyoto'**

TNN, 28 December 2009, 02:55am IST

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister's special envoy on climate change Shyam Saran on Sunday admitted in a TV interview that the Copenhagen Accord that India negotiated at the recently concluded climate talks has left a window open for the burial of Kyoto Protocol.

Developing countries have been fighting for the past two years with the rich nations in order to get them to take emission reduction targets under the second phase of Kyoto Protocol to begin in 2013. But the industrialized countries, many of whom seem off track to meet their targets even in the first phase, have been insisting that the protocol be done away with entirely.

Many had earlier warned that Copenhagen Accord, with India as one of the key negotiators at Danish capital along with US, China, Brazil and South Africa, only deferred the battle over the protocol and not secured its future. Saran admitted so much in the interview. "It opens a window — and that possibility is there — of course. But that depends on how we take negotiations forward. What I am trying to point out is that in a sense we have agreed that we will live to fight another day," he said.

On the volatile issue of scrutiny of self-funded domestic actions of the Indian government to reduce emissions, the envoy differed a bit from environment minister Jairam Ramesh, the head of the Indian delegation at Copenhagen.

When asked if the reference by the minister in Parliament that the Copenhagen Accord only permitted something akin to consultations of actions under IMF rules, Saran said, "I think there is no replication of what happens under the IMF in this particular case (of climate change actions)." He added, "There is a certain similarity in terms of what we agree to do here and with the kind of consultations we have under the IMF or WTO. That is what he (the minister) said."

The UPA had earlier come under fire from both the right and the Left in the Opposition for allowing "analysis and consultation" under the accord of its domestic actions. While the government had defended its deviation from its red lines with the excuse that enough caveats for safeguard had been placed in the new pact.

## **Organic farming gains momentum in Vellore**

By By Our Correspondent

Jan 18 2010

Jan. 17: To revive the good old agricultural practices and get rid of chemical fertilisers and pesticides which ruined natural resources and soil micro organisms in the last few decades, hundreds of farmers in Vellore district have switched over to organic farming.

Adopting organic farming, more than 2,000 farmers in the district have cultivated banana, coconut, guava, samai (little millet), mango, jackfruit, paddy, sugarcane, medicinal nut (kadukkai) and paddy in nearly 3,000 hectares.

In Javadhu hills alone, 1,505 farmers have been certificated by the Association for Promotion of Organic Farming, accredited by the Agriculture Products Export Development Authority, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.

They have been producing hill banana, little millet, mangoes and jackfruit in 1,394 hectares in the last two years.

The worth of the products was around Rs 35 crore per year, said Mr G. S. Purushothaman, president of the Vellore-based Federation of Tamil Nadu Organic Farming Organisation. Similarly, hundreds of farmers in and around Erode, Sathyamangalam, Pollachi, Tiruchy, Coimbatore, Nagapattinam, Chengalpattu, Tiruvannamalai and Sivagangai have been practising organic farming for the last few years.

“But some farmers are a little hesitant as they might incur 25 per cent loss in yield in the first three years,” Purushothaman said.

Considering that consumers are willing to pay extra for organic products, the government should come forward to support this healthy agriculture.

It should allocate Rs 1,500 crore for those who adopt organic farming.

Besides this, the government should help farmers market their products and tap the export potential, he added.

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