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Agricultural officials told to produce documentaries on SRI cultivation

Staff Reporter

The short film/documentary would be screened to the public and in schools

— Photo: Special Arrangement



Seetharam Gurumurthy (centre), Member-Secretary, State Planning Commission inspecting the Jerpa flower cultivation under the precision farming in Chinnabela Kondapalli village in Hosur Panchayat Union on Thursday. Collector V.K. Shanmugam (left) and Additional Collector (Development) K. Luxmi Priya (right) is also in the picture.

KRISHNAGIRI: Officials of the agriculture department have been instructed to produce short film/documentary on cultivation of paddy under System of Rice Intensification (SRI) method and its success stories in the State with inputs from the beneficiaries.

The short film/documentary would be screened to the public and in schools.

Inspecting the paddy fields cultivated under the SRI method at S. Mudhuganapalli village in Kelemangalam Panchayat union on Thursday, Seetharam Gurumurthy, Tamilnadu Planning Committee Member and retired IAS officer, gave this direction to the officials of the agriculture department.

Mr. Gurumurthy also inspected the Jerpa flower and Capsicum cultivation through precision farming under the greenhouse scheme in Chinnabela Kondapalli village in Hosur Panchayat Union under the National Agriculture Development Programme.

He interacted with farmers and asked about the benefits of precision farming.

Mr. Gurumurthy gave away agricultural equipment to the Women SHGs

undertaking farming activities.

Inspection

He also inspected the desilting of lakes under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and Anaithu Grama Anna Marumalarchi Thittam (AGAMT) at Thavakarai, Kandaganapalli, Pithireddy, Alubali and A. Kothapalli villages and repairing of A. Kothapalli canal and laying of road between Kandaganapalli and Mallasenai in Kelamangalam Panchayat Union.

Plant saplings

Inspecting the construction sites of rural libraries under AGAMT scheme in Kandaganapalli, Poonapalli, Biramangalam, Mr. Gurumurthy directed the officials to plant saplings around the library buildings.

District Collector V.K. Shanmugam, Additional Collector (Development) K. Luxmi Priya, Assistant Director (Agriculture) N. Nagarajan, Assistant Director (Horticulture) P. Kaliappan, Engineer J. Maruthi, among others accompanied Mr. Seetharam Gurumurthy.

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Quality seeds essential for rain-fed farming, says scientist

Staff Reporter

— Photo: Special Arrangement



V. Thirumalai, Assistant General Manager, NABARD, addressing at a training programme for farmers at the Regional Research Station, Paiyur near Krishnagiri on Thursday.

KRISHNAGIRI: Quality seeds are essential for rain-fed farming, Dr. A.K. Mani, Professor and Head, Regional Research Station of the Tamil Nadu Agriculture

University, Paiyur said here on Thursday.

Solid foundation

Presiding over the three-day training programme on imparting knowledge and skills on seed production to the farmers and farm women, Dr. Mani stressed the need for quality seeds in rain-fed farming, as it will lay a solid foundation for getting high vigour seedlings with better root and shoot system.

Standard of life

Inaugurating the training programme, V. Thirumalai, Assistant General Manager, National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, explained the role played by NABARD for improving the standard of life of the farmers in the country. NABARD is extending financial assistance for research and extension programmes in implementing various capacity building programmes, he said.

As many as 30 farmers from 15 districts in the State and Pudhucherry Union Territory were participating in the three-day programme.

Dr. S. Vijayabaskaran, Associate Professor (Agronomy), RRS, Paiyur welcomed the gathering.

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Tamilnadu Vivasayigal Sangam to lay siege to taluk offices on March 1

Staff Reporter

KRISHNAGIRI: Tamilnadu Vivasayigal Sangam affiliated to Communist Party of India (Marxist) will lay siege to taluk offices across the State on March 1 demanding restoration of 'Panchami Lands' to Dalits, said P. Shanmugam, State secretary of the sangam, on Thursday.

MR. Shanmugam told *The Hindu* that the sangam was planning an agitation before the taluk offices urging the government to reclaim 5.5 lakh acres of Panchami Lands in the state occupied or controlled by "rich and influential people".

These lands should be given to the Dalits.

The Sangam also urged the government to establish a separate authority to retrieve and manage the Panchami Lands in the state.

Mr. Shanmugam also demanded that the government issue two acres of land to the landless farmers and free house site pattas to the landless.

Earlier, he met District Revenue Officer P. Prabhakaran and submitted a memorandum requesting him to reclaim more than 500 acres from an influential family in Reddipatti in the district.

Later, he along with Mr. P. Dillibabu, Harur M.L.A. and D. Ravindran, District Secretary, CPI (M), squatted near the Collector's chambers demanding proper reply from the authorities.

Revenue Divisional Officer A. Anbarasu promised the leaders that he would take proper action in two months after verifying documents. He also promised to stop transfer of lands under dispute in the Reddipatti village.

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‘Science and technology have helped country develop’

Staff Reporter

Nation is now self-sufficient in food production: V-C

PHOTO: M. GOVARTHAN



***Innovation:* Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare S. Gandhi Selvan (right), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Vice-Chancellor P. Murugesu Boopathi (second right) and others look at the exhibits displayed at the Science and Tech, Agri Expo, organised on Friday at Excel Engineering College, Komarapalayam. —**

ERODE: Science and technology have aided the country's development. The nation is what it is today because of the two, P. Murugesu Boopathi, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, has said.

“Though science and technology have contributed for the overall development, their role in agriculture is singular, for the country has achieved self sufficiency in food production,” he said at the Science and Tech Expo, Agri Expo and Aero Show, organised by the Excel Educational Institutions in Komarapalayam on

Friday.

“In 1947 when the population was around 36 crore and food production 53 mn tonne, the country struggled to feed people. Food had to be imported and the nation was dependent on other countries. Today, however, it is self sufficient and the reason is science and technology.”

Dr. Boopathi said during the Third Five-Year Plan the Union Government decided to focus on agricultural development as food production was not at the expected level and people in rural areas continued to live in poverty.

That was when the Government funded the setting up of agricultural universities and research stations to promote agriculture and allied activities.

“Today, if the food production stands at 234 mn tonne and the Government is able to feed hungry mouths it is because of the infusion of science and technology in agriculture and the ushering in of Green Revolution,” he reiterated.

The current challenge before agricultural institutions was more as area under cultivation was shrinking while the demand for food was growing, he said.

He added that TNAU was promoting the use of the system of rice intensification (SRI) in paddy, bringing in drip irrigation, introducing precision farming, etc.

The University was also working on farm mechanisation and implements to suit Indian conditions, where land holding is small. These would soon be introduced.

He also said that the institution had so far introduced 246 new varieties of crops and 163 pieces of farm equipment.

Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare S. Gandhi Selvan said the country had made rapid strides in agriculture, health and medicine, industry, transport and media all because of science and technology.

He also spoke on the State Government’s efforts to promote education and support weaker sections of the society.

C.V. Giriraj, Senior Scientist, National Aerospace Laboratories, spoke on the theme of how his organisation helped students.

Chairman, Excel Group of Institutions, A.K. Natesan said the management organised the function to provide a platform for students to showcase their talent and interact with experts from academia and industry.

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Mettur level

The water level at the Mettur dam stood at 76.81 feet on Friday against its full level of 120 feet. The inflow was 822 cusecs and the discharge nil.

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Milk producers union seeks hike in procurement price

Staff Reporter

Owing to steep rise in price of cattle feed, medical care costs

Need to provide free veterinary care every week at the societies stressed

Free distribution of mixed cattle feed of 1,400 kg per calf for 28 months sought

Coimbatore: Coimbatore District Milk Producers Union citing the steep hike in price of cattle feed and veterinary medical care costs has sought an increase of Rs 1.50 per litre in procurement price.

A meeting of the union held recently thanked the Government for sanctioning Rs. 7 crore for paying the milk producers.

Milk Producers Union patron S.R. Rajagopal in a release said the Coimbatore Union was making profit because of the uniform policy of the Government.

However, owing to some loss making unions, there is a hitch in paying a share of the profits back to the milk producers of profit making unions.

Mr. Rajagopal said that milk producers in Coimbatore have nearly 45,000 cows. Insurance cover had been provided to over 20,000 cows.

The remaining 25,000 cows need to be insured with 50 per cent subsidy from the Centre and remaining 50 per cent from the union.

He also sought free distribution of mixed cattle feed of 1,400 kg per calf for 28 months.

Mr. Rajagopal also sought fixation of reasonable pay for the staff working in village milk co-operative societies. To encourage procurement of quality milk, the concept of providing 10 paise per litre to the society secretary and the assistant of the milk society should be implemented immediately.

To ensure availability of cattle feed grass, the union suggested that seeds could be provided at a subsidised rate.

Workers involved in artificial fertilisation could be provided with incentive and two-wheeler at a subsidised rate.

The union also sought provision of a power-saw at 75 per cent subsidised rate to avoid wastage of cattle feed while cutting it for distribution.

The union also sought provision of rust-proof stainless steel for village co-operative milk societies free of cost.

Societies need to be provided with Ultra Modern Milk Analyser with printer and UPS.

Similarly, the Union suggested provision of mineral mixture at 80 per cent subsidy for the milk suppliers depending on the quantity of milk provided to them.

Societies that accounted for 1000 litres of milk and more could be provided with computer and printer besides proper training for secretaries.

The veterinarian could visit the village societies every week for providing free veterinary care, the press release added.

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Water level

MADURAI: The water level in the Periyar dam on Friday stood at 114.60 feet (full level 136 feet) with no inflow and a discharge of 400 cusecs.

The level in the Vaigai dam was 46.62 feet (71 feet) with an inflow of 201 cusecs and a discharge of 310 cusecs.

The combined Periyar credit stood at 2,089 mcft.

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Programme on global warming

Staff Reporter

TIRUNELVELI: The Tirunelveli Telecom District of Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited conducted competitions for school students in and around Surandai to create an awareness of 'Global warming and climate change' on last Tuesday as part of the communication giant's Republic Day celebrations. A total of 1,048 students participated in the drawing competition.

Prizes were distributed to 60 Students under five groups. The first prize under Group A was awarded to Ram Ratan, 3rd standard student from Bharat Montessori school, Ilanji, and the second prize went to A. Beulah, 3rd standard student from TDTA Primary School, Bungalow Surandai.

About 300 students (7th standard and above) took part in the cycle rally in the afternoon. The rally that started at East Surandai traversed Sivagurunathapuram, Aladipatti, Vadiyoor, Mariadasapuram, Parankuntrapuram, covering about 10 Km before reaching Maruthiahapuram.

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“Raise moisture limit”

Staff Reporter

Farmers want paddy moisture limit to be raised to 23 per cent



GRIEVANCES GALORE: Farmers' grievance meeting being held at the Nagapattinam Collectorate on Friday.

NAGAPATTINAM: Farmers' representatives of Nagapattinam district have called for the procurement of paddy with a higher moisture content in the direct procurement centres (DPCs).

This was prominent among a spate of demands and grievances that were aired at the farmers' grievance day meeting held here at the district Collectorate on Friday. Under the current system, DPCs allow a moisture content of up to 17 per cent. However, according to farmers, this is a recurrent grievance every winter. They sought an increase in the moisture mark to 20-23 per cent.

According to Mujib Shereek, a private silicate extraction unit has been proposed at Vadamazhai in Manakadu village of Vedaranyam. An inspection should be conducted to ascertain its potential impact on agricultural land. In the event of

adversity to agriculture, licence ought to be cancelled, he said.

Further, a fund of Rs.19.7 lakh that was allotted in 2005 as building fund for the veterinary hospital in Thalainayar has remained unutilised.

No initiatives have been taken, and the facility remains dysfunctional, said a farmer.

Farmers also called for non-implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural employment Guarantee Scheme till the completion of paddy harvest to avoid labour deficit.

Kaveri Dhanapalan of Cauvery Farmers' Protection Association sought the setting up of a DPC monitoring committee with members of farmers' associations as its members. He also demanded a rethink on the proposed Mayanur check dam to be constructed on the river Cauvery between Mayanur and Karur.

According to him, the 1,233-metre-wide dam with 98 vents and a proposed storage capacity of 1.04 tmc would eat into the water availability for the Delta. He called for administrative intervention on a project that would fail the agricultural prospects of the entire Cauvery Delta. Farmers also demanded that the district be declared disaster-prone.

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Stop construction of dam, say farmers

Staff Reporter

KARUR: The Tamil Nadu Toddy Movement has called upon the State and the Central Governments to take effective and urgent steps to protect the interests of the thousands of ayacutdars who depend on the river Amaravathy for irrigating their fields in view of the reported dam construction activity by Kerala across *Pambar*.

Movement co-ordinator S. Nallasamy said here on Friday that the move by Kerala Government bode ill for the farmers dependent on the *Amaravathy* as the *Pambar* was a major source of bringing rainwater.

The beneficiary regions in Tamil Nadu, including Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode and Karur fell in the rain shadow region while the catchment areas of the river receive copious rainfall.

An estimated 60,000 acres under Amaravathy ayacut in those districts would be adversely affected should Kerala proceed with its plans to construct a barrage or a dam, Mr. Nallasamy pointed out. Not only irrigation but also drinking water sources might be affected, he opined calling upon the State and the Central

Governments to act expeditiously in the matter.

The act of Kerala Government in diverting the *Pambar* water was against nature and militated against natural justice as well, Mr. Nallasamy observed. National water resources should be judiciously spent and should not be source of jingoistic actions and parochial activities, he added. Similarly, Mr. Nallasamy called upon intensified efforts on the part of the governmental agencies to protect the *Amaravathy* from further pollution onslaught. Dyeing, bleaching and other textile related industrial activities had spoiled the river, he said.

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One month after Copenhagen

M.R. Srinivasan

Since India is still in the early stages of development trajectory, it is better equipped to demonstrate a low carbon lifestyle, which other societies could emulate.

One month after the global summit meeting on climate change is a good time to take stock of the events at Copenhagen. Leading to the summit was a well informed debate in Parliament, in which a number of our younger MPs took active part. Minister of State for Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh gave a comprehensive reply, stating clearly the red times in India's negotiating position. Before the Indian team left for Copenhagen, some of the negotiators expressed dismay at his announcement that India would work for a voluntary reduction of 20 to 25 per cent in energy intensity in 2020, compared to 2005. The Minister took his cue from China, which had announced a reduction of 40 to 45 per cent.

India has been saying it does not want to be part of the problem but wants to be part of the solution. India with a per capita carbon emission of a little more than one tonne cannot create a problem for the survival of the world. The U.S. with an emission of 23 tonnes certainly can. It refused to ratify the Kyoto Protocol and has been trying to let the Protocol die. Its position is that it can take on binding obligations only if countries like China and India undertake similar obligations.

There is confusion in the minds of many that the positions of India and China are identical. In one respect, they are identical: neither of them is responsible for the historical emissions from the advent of industrial revolution till the last decades of the 20th century. Now China is the biggest single emitter of carbon and its average emission is about 5 tonnes, compared to about 10 tonnes by the European Union, Japan and Russia. Hence its announcement of a voluntary reduction of 40 to 45 per cent by 2020, compared to 2005, is to be welcomed.

The U.S. is still a laggard in coming up with a target for reduction. There is legislative action under way whereby the emissions are to go down by 17 per cent by 2020, as compared to 2005. But this will mean a reduction of only 4 per cent

compared to the 1990 level. Thus this falls far short of what developed countries were obliged to effect under the Kyoto Protocol. Furthermore, even the modest reduction goal set by President Barack Obama may not receive the approval of the U.S. Senate. These numbers have to be compared with the necessity of the developed countries to reduce emissions by 80 per cent by 2050, if the global temperature rise is to be restricted to 20 degrees C.

The Danish Chair of the Copenhagen summit was clearly under pressure to drive the negotiations in the direction desired by the developed countries. Thus it was that the financial assistance promised to the least developed and island nations, put at some \$30 billion now (and going up to some \$100 billion by 2020), was made contingent on the major developing countries, including China, India, South Africa and Brazil, taking on mandatory emission cuts.

The developing countries were pressing that a successor agreement to the Kyoto Protocol, with higher emission reduction obligations for the developed countries, should emerge from Copenhagen. The least developed countries and island nations wanted to ensure that the developed countries committed themselves to substantial financial assistance. The conference was heading towards the predicted conclusion of total failure. At this stage, President Obama came in. Initially, he was trying for a one-to-one meeting with the Chinese Prime Minister. However, he was prepared to meet Mr. Obama only along with the leaders of Brazil, South Africa and India (the BASIC Group). In fact, Mr. Obama virtually barged into a meeting of the BASIC leaders.

It was at this meeting that the so-called Copenhagen accord was arrived at. The accord stated there should be an upper limit of 20 degrees C for rise in global temperature by 2050. No intermediate targets were set. No commitments were made by the developed countries. With regard to the developing countries (such as the BASIC Group), their voluntary emission reduction programmes would be subject to an international consultation process. The U.S., on behalf of the developed countries, indicated that some \$30 billion would be available as assistance to the least developed and vulnerable island nations for mitigation programmes. This funding, which might go up to \$100 billion by 2020, would come from a basket of governmental, private sector and other sources. There is considerable vagueness as to the actual amount of money that may in fact be disbursed.

When this accord was brought before the final plenary, it was formally rejected by a number of countries because it was arrived at non-democratically by a small number of countries. The developed countries, expectedly, went along with the accord. The BASIC countries themselves entered the caveat that the accord was legally non-binding. It is strange that the U.N. Secretary-General has asked India (and other BASIC countries) to commit themselves to their voluntary emission reduction programmes. The Prime Minister's prompt rejection of this initiative of the Secretary-General (and Danish Prime Minister) is timely and welcome.

The Planning Commission has been tasked with indicating how the energy intensity of the Indian economy can be cut down by 20 to 25 per cent from the 2005 level by 2020. A time frame of three months has been envisaged for the study. A proper

study would need detailed consultations with stakeholders in various sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing industry, mineral extraction, transportation, housing, and service. India should not needlessly put pressure on itself to arrive at a hasty and unworkable programme.

India has held the view that there should be a convergence in per capita emissions over a period of time, as this would mean equitable sharing of the environmental space. It has, however, put no specific number on the table. One may speculate that this number could be about five tonnes per capita, about half the present level in the EU, Japan, and Russia. It is also close to the level China has already reached. This number could go down over a period of time, if most of our energy were to come from non-fossil sources such as solar, hydro, nuclear, wind, and bio-energy.

Another issue is the date by which carbon emissions should peak. R.K. Pachauri indicated that it could perhaps be 2015. This date may be acceptable to the developed world and even China. In view of the late start India made on its development process, the carbon peaking date would have to be much later. Our power generation will continue to depend heavily on coal (and gas to the extent available) for several decades. India hopes to induct nuclear power in a big way but inevitably it is time consuming. So far as solar energy is concerned, further R&D to reduce costs is absolutely necessary. India possesses the requisite S&T manpower to embark on this task. Indian industry is now sufficiently developed to embark on a partnership with government laboratories and academic institutions to make this possible. What we need to evolve is a cooperative partnership that can deliver the desired results. The expectation that the developed countries would make these technologies available other than for profit is unrealistic.

An issue that has engaged climate change specialists is carbon trading, which is already in vogue and may become a big business in course of time. Many specialists feel that this measure will do nothing to reduce emissions. The levy of a carbon tax or grant of carbon credit could directly reduce emissions.

Developed countries are loath to discuss lifestyle changes, which India insists are necessary to permit a transition to a sustainable future. Since we are still in the early stages of our development trajectory, we are better equipped to demonstrate a low carbon lifestyle, which other societies could emulate.

Finally, there is the question of population. So far as India is concerned, a peak population of one-and-a-half-billion is on the horizon. The resources of land, water and food, apart from energy and minerals, available to India will be inadequate to support such a large number, except at a marginal level. Therefore, it is imperative that we adopt policies leading to population stabilisation soon and, indeed, a declining population thereafter.

By Express News Service
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'Price of atta is higher in state'

ALAPPUZHA: Central Vigilance Committee chairman on public distribution system and former Supreme Court judge D P Wadhwa said the price of atta in Kerala was high compared with North Indian states like Rajasthan.

The CVC would hold an inquiry to find out whether black marketing was the reason for the same. He was addressing reporters here on Thursday after a meeting with District Collector P Venugopal to review the PDS.

The committee, constituted as per a Supreme Court order to look into maladies affecting the PDS, visited the district on Thursday and held meetings with district and taluk supply officers, officials of the Civil Supplies and FCI.

Wadhwa has directed the District Supply Officer to check hoarding and black marketing of kerosene and to find out the reason for the decreasing number of ration card holders in the district.

The FCI has informed the CVC that the Civil Supplies Corporation has not taken 786 tonnes of rice allotted for Onam to ration card-holders in Alappuzha district till date.

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Farmers chip in against Bt Brinjal

Swati Mathur, TNN, 30 January 2010, 04:21am IST

NEW DELHI: The debate on Bt brinjal is getting broader, with farmers and health experts putting their weight behind the campaign against commercial marketing and supply of the food crop. Even as scientists and farmers cry foul over the ill-effects of genetically modified crops, an equally large community of scientists and patent holders are making a strong case in favour of Bt brinjal.

Sharing their experience of growing Bt cotton, the genetically modified crop that received legal sanction over seven years ago, farmers from Punjab addressed a two-day event organised by the Indian People's Tribunal on Genetically Modified Foods and Seeds.

"Compared to non-Bt crops, we did not really profit from sowing Bt crops. In fact, the use of fertilisers and DAP increased, while our yields dipped," said Jasdeep Singh, a farmer hailing from a Punjab village.

According to Singh, yields remained low even after he reverted to sowing wheat on his farmland. While depreciating returns from their farmlands remained the bone of contention for farmers, the resultant health hazards from growing GM crops were also the focus of the

discussion. Public health activist with Jan Swasthya Abhiyan Mira Shiva said, "Members of the health community reject the proposal for commercialisation of Bt crops on grounds that there is no system in place for conducting post-marketing surveillance. Unless the health hazards are studied, there should be a moratorium imposed."

The comments assume significance in the wake of farmers registering allergic reactions during the harvesting season of Bt cotton in Punjab. According to experts, even farm labourers travelling to Punjab from Rajasthan have complained of itches and rashes after working on Bt sowing farms.