COIMBATORE: Ajay Vir Jakhar is the chairman of Bharat Krishak Samaj, a prominent forum for farmers. Over the years, his group has fought for everything from better NREGA to a better Right to Food Act. When he speaks about farmers, his demeanour is one of an impassioned pleader for their rights. In an exclusive interview with The Times of India, he spoke about how NREGS could be modified to make it a win-win situation for both the farmers and farm labourers. At present, land owning farmers find it tough to hire labour to till their land. He also said that technology has to be mixed with traditional practices in the right way to maximise the yield. Jakhar spends 15 days in his farm in Maujagarh in Firozpur district of Punjab. He is ‘10 km’ from everywhere - Pakistan, Haryana and Rajasthan. "So 15 days I spend in my corner of the world and other 15 days of a month in New Delhi and other places," he said. He raises Kinnow, a variety of oranges in Maujagarh and has recently started using a vaccine plant version of this variety, which enables him to transport the variety down south instead of just New Delhi, where he gets very low price. Bharat Krishak Samaj was started on April 3, 1955 and has gained prominence in his locality. "We were agriculturalists for the last 200 years," says Jakhar proudly. Asked what he felt Indian farmer needed the most, Jakhar said it was education. "Farmers need to adopt best agricultural practices. Extension services by the agriculture department, which are good in Tamil Nadu, need to be effectively utilised across the country. In most places, farmers haven't even met their block development officer. They choose crops and fertilizers by what the shopkeeper says. This situation needs to be changed," he said, adding that his website (www.farmersforum.in) enlists the advocacy issues that his organisation has taken up. "There is a last mile connectivity issue in India. Farmers don't even know what schemes the government has for them," he said. As for NREGA, he said the district collector and university officials should decide on a period of 150 days every year in which the farmer need not work. "In 100 days a year, he will also find work in farms as farm labour is getting more expensive and scarce," he said. (Times of India 2/1/12)
debt relief measures taken by the government. But the numbers again rose during the last few months of 2011. (Times of India 3/1/12)

Rising farmer suicides in West Bengal appalling: Left (20)
KOLKATA, January 7, 2012: The frequency of incidents of farmers committing suicides is “unimaginable” in West Bengal, State Left Front chairman Biman Bose said here on Friday. “The government had fixed a target of 20 lakh metric tonnes for procurement of paddy from peasants in the State. According to reports, it has only collected 2 lakh metric tonnes so far,” Mr. Bose, who is also the State secretary of the CPI(M), told journalists. Stating that paddy procurement was “meagre,” compared to that of other States, Mr. Bose said: “farmers are being driven to distress sales and are not being able to repay their loans. The way farmers' suicides are taking place in Bengal, it is unimaginable. The figure has now gone up to 12 (suicides since the Trinamool Congress-led Government came to power in the State).” Congratulating the efforts of the four peasant organisations affiliated to the Left parties, which organised an agricultural strike in the rural areas on January 4, Mr. Bose urged the government to initiate measures that would ensure that farmers got fair prices for their produce. He said farmers were not even receiving the minimum support price that had been declared by the Centre. The Centre had announced a minimum support price of Rs.1,080 a quintal of paddy. However, farmers were claiming that they were being paid far less. Mr. Bose was critical of the manner in which “the environment has been vitiated in educational institutions” across the State since the Trinamool Congress came to power. (The Hindu 7/1/12)

Congress meets Chhattisgarh governor on farmers' suicide (20)
Raipur, Jan 10 : Chhattisgarh's Congress has complained to Governor Shekhar Dutt about unabated suicide deaths of farmers in the state during the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) regime, a party spokesperson said Tuesday. A delegation of the party led by state president Nandkumar Patel met the governor Monday and sought his attention towards rising suicide deaths of farmers across the state, party state spokesperson Shailesh Nitin Trivedi told reporters. He added that cases of farmers' suicide had risen in recent months as farmers were reeling under a debt trap. The Congress claims that more than 18,000 farmers have committed suicide in the state since December 2003 when the BJP came to power. (IANS) (New Kerala 10/1/12)

Debt leads farmer to kill self (20)
BURDWAN: Unable to put up with the rising debt burden, yet another farmer in the state committed suicide on Saturday. Tapas Majhi, 35, hanged himself from a mango tree in Suluntu village in Purbasthal. Tapas’s brother Gadadhar said, elder brother of the deceased, said alleged Tapas had debt of Rs 30,000 debt to mahajans and fertilizer shops. He had cultivated paddy on 19 acre and coriander on five acre, but could not repay the loan as he did not get proper price for his crops. However, Kanla SDO Sumita Bagchi refuted the allegation that Tapas killed himself because of debt as baseless According to her, Bagchi said the death was a result of family feud. District Trinamool Kisan Congress president Raj Kumar Pandey also asserted that Tapas committed suicide due to a feud with his wife and had been missing from his home for past few days. “Why will a debt-ridden farmer commit suicide 14kms away from home? He was a Trinamool supporter and I have verified the facts,” Pandey said. However, Gadadhar rebutted any possibility of a family feud and insisted Tapas was under tremendous loan pressure over the past two yearsTapas's wife Purnima said her husband left home only on Friday and did not return till Saturday morning. A villager spotted the hanging body and informed police. Later, the family identified the body at the police station. Purbasthal police has started an unnatural death case and sent the body for post-mortem at Kalna SD Hospital CPM central committee member Madan Ghosh complained that the government was not serious about farmers' problem. "More than 20 farmers have committed suicide and the state government has not bothered to give compensation to the victims though money has been given to hooch victims. There is no agricultural policy of this state government and the farmers are paying prices due to her negligence," he said. (Times of India 15/1/12)

Debt trap: 1 more farmer commits suicide in Kerala (20)
Kalpetta, Kerala, Jan 17 : Unable to pay back his loans which he had taken from various sources, one more farmer committed suicide in hilly Wayanad district of Kerala. Police said the body of Mohanan (50), who had apparently consumed poison, was found in his house at Chetalayam in Sulthan Bathery in the district today. His relatives said the farmer was distressed as he was not in a position to return the loan
taken by him due to crop failure. Many farmers had committed suicide in the state for similar reason in the state during the last two months. (UNI) (New Kerala 17/1/12)

Debt-ridden farmer kills self (20)

CHANDANAGORE: A 46-year-old farmer committed suicide after returning from his fields in Haripal's Bandipur on Tuesday morning, fueling allegations that he killed himself because he was unable to sell his harvest or repay his debts. This is the third farmer suicide in the state in less than a week. On Saturday, paddy farmer Tapas Majhi hanged himself in Suluntu village in Purbaashtali, Burdwan. A day later, potato farmer Rabindranath Patra, 28, of Begpur in Burdwan took pesticide and died in hospital. The families of both victims say they were driven to despair because they did not get the proper price for their crops. The administration, however, denied that any of the suicides were due to crop prices or debt. Even in Tuesday's case, the administration refuses to admit that Ganesh Durlabh committed suicide because he could not sell his harvest. The police say he killed himself due to a domestic squabble with his son and daughter-in-law. Ganesh's wife, Asha, however has a different story. She said that he was unable to sell off the potatoes he had sown last year and suffered a huge debt this year because he could not sell his paddy crop or even the few vegetables he had grown. "He had taken a loan of Rs 3,000 from the Panishaula agri-credit society and Rs 10,000 from elsewhere. There was no way he could have paid off the debt," she said. Bandipur's gram panchayat pradhan Kanchan Durlabh made the same allegation. The panchayat is run by the CPM. Chandannagore SDPO Tathagata Chowdhury, however, contradicted these claims. "We enquired into the matter. They have a recurring family dispute which led to this death. We spoke with locals and family members. The victim did not agree to his son's marriage. He had constant squabbles with his son and daughter-in-law. In fact they had one last night itself," he said. Haripal MLA Becharam Manna, one of the leaders of the Singur movement, backed the administration. "The victim was also a decorator. Whenever a cultivator heads for his fields, he knows it might lead to a loss. There are other farmers there, why didn't they choose the same path. The allegations aren't true. A family dispute was behind this death." Asha said Ganesh had gone to the fields early morning as usual, raising no suspicion. He took pesticide and died on the way to Haripal hospital. Police have registered a case of unnatural death case and sent the body for autopsy. (Times of India 18/1/12)

Suicides also influenced by policies of State governments: Karat (20)

KOLKATA, January 18, 2012: Claiming that there had been a rise in farmer suicides in both West Bengal and Kerala after non-Left governments came to power, Communist Party of India (Marxist) general secretary Prakash Karat said here on Tuesday that the policies of the State government had also influenced the phenomenon. Criticising the policies of successive governments at the Centre for the "large scale agrarian distress" in the country which saw 2,56,913 farmers commit suicide, Mr. Karat said that while the phenomenon was rampant in States like Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, it had not been seen in West Bengal. "I'm told that at least 21 farmers have committed suicides in the recent weeks in West Bengal. This is also related to the policies of the State government. If you do not intervene to see that farmers get a fair or minimum price for procurement, if you do not take steps to alleviate their indebtedness – this will happen," Mr. Karat said. He cited the example of Wayanad district in Kerala, which has witnessed "seven farmer suicides in the last month and a half since the Congress-led government came to power." Until 2006, there were a number of suicides by farmers Wayanad district. The Left Democratic Front came to power in May 2006 and took some measures. They passed a law in the Assembly whereby they set up a commission for indebtedness. Farmers could approach the commission to get relief from their debt, he said. (The Hindu 18/1/12)

Mamata Banerjee denies reports of farmers' suicide in Bengal (20)

Kolkata: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Thursday denied reports about farmers' suicide in the state, a day after CPI(M) general secretary Prakash Karat held the Trinamool Congress-led government responsible for the suicides. "Twelve persons died due to some disease and they were not connected to farming, while reports said that some others took heavy loans from banks for personal purposes," Banerjee told a Panchayatiraj Sammelan at the Netaji Indoor Stadium. Challenging the CPI(M) for spreading canards against her government, the chief minister claimed that 199 farmers had been killed by the Left Front while it was in power. "You should be ashamed of the atrocities committed during your rule on the farmers. You killed farmers, looted them, snatched their produce and drove them out of their fields. We have not forgotten the atrocities on them," she alleged. "To safeguard the farmers'
interests, I went on a 26-day fasting in the city in 2006, while farmland was being forcibly acquired. I know farmers' agony,” Banerjee said. She said her government during the seven-month rule introduced Kisan Card and the farmers' insurance scheme and denied the CPI(M)'s charge that she had kept quiet while the fertiliser price was decontrolled. Further to her defence, she said she was instrumental in resisting the Centre's move to raise prices of petroleum products and FDI entry in the retail sector. Karat had on Wednesday blamed the policy of the present state government for the suicide of "at least 21 farmers in West Bengal in recent weeks". "If you don't intervene to ensure that farmers get fair or minimum price for procurement and if you don't take adequate steps to alleviate their indebtedness, this will happen," Karat told reporters on Wednesday. (DNA 19/1/12)

**Congress ticks off Mamata Banerjee on farmer suicides (20)**
KOLKATA: The Congress in West Bengal on Saturday slammed the state government about farmer suicides. State Congress president Pradip Bhattacharya said chief minister Mamata Banerjee was not briefed properly about the plight of farmers in the state. Officials were trying to downplay the crisis. Earlier, Left Front chairman Biman Bose had criticized the state government and said leader of the opposition Surjya Kanta Mishra will lead teams to districts where farmers have committed suicide. Bhattacharya, too, said the Congress will send fact-finding teams to the affected districts to find out why they are committing suicide. "Some officers are trying to downplay the malaise and trying to project that farmers killed themselves due to depression. They are claiming this when 24 farmers have committed suicide. What's the harm in facing the ground reality? Falling prices of crops, piling debt, lack of supply of fertiliser and seeds are leading to depression and death," he said. Bhattacharya said the CM needs to make efforts to gather information from sources other than the officials. Bhattacharya also demanded compensation for the victims' families. But, he said, "I have no plan to embarrass the government. I am concerned with the plight of the farmers that has been reported in the media." Bhattacharya's comments came a day after Congress high command allowed Congress minister Manoj Chakrabarty to quit Mamata's ministry. (Times of India 22/1/12)

**27 farmers dead: Bengal gets kin to rewrite suicide note (20)**
Burdwan: While Governor M K Narayanan has also put the weight of his office behind the growing concern over farmer suicides in West Bengal, the Mamata Banerjee government seems determined to play these down. In Burdwan, the state's rice bowl, where 18 of the 27 deaths have been reported in the past four months, the district administration has been approaching families of victims for written statements saying the suicides had nothing to do with debt burden or distress sale of crops. Despite evidence of piles of paddy lying unsold and of debts owed by farmers mounting, these statements attribute the deaths to everything else from "emotional stress" to "family discord". The suicides in Burdwan follow a surplus production of 12 lakh metric tonnes of paddy, against a requirement of 5 to 6 lakh metric tonnes this season. In other parts of rural Bengal, a shoddy procurement drive ensured that targets fell short by 20 lakh metric tonnes, leaving farmers with paddy they haven't been able to sell. What made the problem worse was a decision to bar cooperatives from procuring paddy from farmers. In Burdwan as many as 517 cooperatives were trying to procure paddy. Instead, the district administration distributed slips to farmers, with the plan being that they could sell directly to the rice millers. However, in many places, millers refused to pay the support price (Rs 1,080 per quintal) as they could procure cheaper paddy from Bihar and Jharkhand. Bhatar saw suicides by five farmers in November-December. Safar Mollah of Kalutukri village consumed pesticide on November 18. The 18-year-old had taken up farming at the age of 12, after his father's death, but run up a debt of Rs 90,000 in two years, said his family. He hoped to repay some of it with the sale of paddy but could not sell his 200 quintals. (Indian Express 26/1/12)

**Agriculture losses led to family's suicide (20)**
MYSORE: Agriculture didn't bring a ray of sunshine into the life of scarpyard agent-turned-farmer Abdul Javed Pasha, who allegedly ended his life along with four of his family members, including wife and three children on Tuesday. Pasha, who was working in a scarpyard in Kollegala, tried his luck in agriculture after a villager promised to support him in farming. He then moved with his family to Bolegowdana Doddi from Kollegala town in 2009 and took to agriculture, hoping that it would make his life brighter. But fate had the other way. He invested in agriculture by borrowing money from moneylenders but incurred heavy losses. Pasha then took to poultry business to cover up his debts, but there too he suffered losses. According to B G Doddi villagers, Pasha was an honest and good-natured person and led a blameless life...
Govt to review rights commission report on farmer suicides (20)
Bhopal: When he drank a can of pesticide in desperation and died, young farmer Bhawandas Patel of Damoh possibly could not have imagined that he would be the last straw on the proverbial camel’s back, for the government. But Patel’s suicide two days ago has hopefully moved the Madhya Pradesh government into reviewing recommendations of the Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission (MPHRC) for stopping more farmers in the state from taking the extreme step. In its report the commission had starkly underlined why around 4000 farmers in state had killed themselves in just the last few years. It had even described how and why many farmers were actually left with no option but to commit suicide. The report was categoric that corruption in government-run welfare schemes, and not just the usual bane of indebtedness, was one of the major reasons for so many farmers ending life in MP; besides crop failure due to spurious fertilisers, sub-standard seeds and undue pressure from loan sharks.

The report, submitted to the state government earlier this year, had been gathering dust at the secretariat. However, state agriculture minister Ramkrishna Kusumaria said on Tuesday that the government will consider it seriously. Talking to media persons after the cabinet meeting, the minister said “The MPHRC report on farmers’ suicide is now being looked into. The agriculture department would identify steps for checking such incidents in consultation with other concerned departments. The recommendations would be put up to the chief minister,” he said, adding Bhawandas Patel’s suicide is being examined. Sources said the MPHRC recommendations would be categorised and issues that could be addressed by other departments would be sent to them. The rest would be marked for the cabinet or to the central. (Times of India 1/2/12)

Rice bowl turns bare for farmers in West Bengal (20)
Bardhaman, February 1, 2012: Baishakhi Ghosh sits at the threshold of her home at Kauri village in Bardhaman district with her new-born son, but breaks into tears as her mother feeds her a sweetmeat — part of the rituals of bringing her first grandchild to the home for the first time. Alternating between wailing and consoling each other, the women of the household of Bhootnath Pal, a farmer who was found hanging from the branch of a tree on Saturday, do their best to come to terms with the tragedy. “He was overcome with worry these last few months. The thought of another addition to the family must have pushed him over the edge,” said Attanti Pal, Bhootnath’s wife. The worry over his grandchild, born in by a cruel twist of fate just a day after Bhootnath committed suicide, may have been the last straw, but there is no denying the fact that he owed nearly Rs. 30,000 (Rs. 7,500 borrowed as an agricultural loan from the Bank of India more than two years ago, which remains unpaid, Rs. 10,000 taken from a local moneylender and sundry sums elsewhere) or that he had not received the money for the little surplus grain he had harvested this season. Bhootnath joined a few other farmers from Kauri village to sell their grain to the rice mill on January 20 but they were not given any money. A day after his suicide, the cheque in the name of Swapan Pradhan was issued. “We sold our paddy to the rice mill on January 6 and are yet to receive our cheques,” said another farmer from the village. Bhootnath Pal is one of the 31 farmers, who according to media reports committed suicide in the State in the last four months. Twenty-one of these have been reported in Bardhman district alone, considered the rice bowl of West Bengal. According to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee none of them, with the exception of one, is a farmer. After a major disagreement with his father over the purchase of a pair of buffaloes, 20-year-old Prosenjit Mondal hanged himself from a tree. Prosenjit worked on the five bighas (less than two acres) of land — two owned by his father and another three that they tilled for a landlord. Over the years, his father has run up a debt of Rs. 40,000. Already burdened with debt, farmers are being forced to sell their produce at prices much below those of last year. While small farmers like Bhootnath Pal and Prosenjit Mondal have always relied on middlemen to transport their grains to the rice mills, the prices offered by the traders this year are less than those of last year, even as the cost of fertilizers and pesticides has doubled in the same period. “Last year the traders would give us up to Rs. 600 per sack (of 60 kg) of paddy. This year it was as low as Rs. 450,” said Khokon Mondal. According to Food and Supplies Minister Jyoti Priya Mallick, there has been a bumper crop of 150 lakh tonnes of paddy in West Bengal this season. As a result, the price of paddy in the open market has dropped substantially. The Left parties and the Congress have been stating that if the State government procured more grain, the farmers would be assured of the minimum support price of Rs. 1080 per quintal of paddy (Rs. 648 per sack of 60 kg) announced by the Centre. However, Mr. Mallick claims that the State already procured over four lakh
 tonnes of rice, which is more than the three lakh tonnes that the previous Left Front government had
procured. (The Hindu 1/2/12)

**Farmer commits suicide in Burdwan (20)**
BURDWAN: A 45-year-old sharecropper killed himself in a Burdwan village, taking the toll of farmer
suicides in the district to five. Lalu Majhi of Baharpur village under Belkash panchayat under Burdwan
Sadar police station took pesticide on Monday and died in Burdwan Medical College Hospital on Tuesday
morning. His body was cremated on Wednesday. Majhi's brother Swapan alleged that the former owned
very little cultivable land and depended solely on sharecropping. He had borrowed around Rs 50,000
from local moneylenders and was unable to repay them back. Majhi did not have a good crop in the last
Boro season and this time, he cultivated potato and aubergine. But due to blight, a disease, the crops
have been affected badly. Finally, worried about the loan to be repaid, Majhi committed suicide. Majhi has
left behind his widow and two sons. This is the second farmer suicide in Belkash panchayat area in recent
times. Last year, a farmer called Bhabani Porel committed suicide just after chief minister Mamata
Banerjee paid her maiden visit to the district headquarters of the rice bowl of the state. The SDO (north)
of Burdwan has called for a probe. The situation is becoming worse by the day and if the state
government fails to take any step, it will only worsen within a month, alleged Abdar Rezzak Mondal, the
district secretary of the Krishak Sabha. On January 28, a 54-year-old farmer of Katwa, Bhoont Nath Pal,
hunged himself because he feared that he would not be able to repay the moneylender. On January 15,
Rabindranath Patra, 28, a marginal potato farmer, took pesticide at Ghanashyampur village in Kalna. The
day before, Tapas Majhi, 35, another marginal farmer, hanged himself from a mango tree in Suluntu
village of Purbasthali. On January 1, Amiya Saha, 48, a potato farmer, took pesticide in Rajpur village in
Memari. (Times of India 2/2/12)

**Two more farmers commit suicide (20)**
KALPETTA, February 4, 2012: Two more farmers, one woman, committed suicide in the State in the last
two days. A farm worker committed suicide by consuming poison owing to financial problems at
Ambukuthy near Mananthavadi in the district on Thursday night. The Mananthavadi police identified the
deceased as Thomas, 45, of Pulpara at Ambukuthy. The family members of Thomas said he took the
extreme step owing to financial problems. Thomas had taken loans from various financial institutions,
including the Mananthavadi Service Cooperative Bank, a Kudumbasree unit, Janasree Mission, and the
Catholic Syrian Bank. He could not repay the debt on time from the meagre income he earned.
Meanwhile, the bank authorities had issued a notice to repay the liability in 20 days, they said. Thomas is
survived by wife Gracy and two daughters. In another incident, a 52-year-old woman farmer committed
suicide, allegedly owing to financial distress, at Kommadukunnu, near Cheeral, in the district on
Wednesday. The Sulthan Bathery police identified the deceased as Kamalakshi, wife of Balan of
Edakkottu, Kommadukunnu. Members of the family found her in a critical stage near her house. Though
she was rushed to the taluk hospital at Sulthan Bathery, her life could not be saved, the police said.
Kamalakshi had taken loan of Rs.28,000 from the Cheeral branch of the South Malabar Gramin Bank,
and borrowed nearly Rs.50,000 from some micro financial institutions and her friends for farming on her
83 cents of land. Crop loss, illness of her husband and financial liability had upset the woman, the
relatives said. Kamalakshi is survived by her husband and two children. (The Hindu 4/2/12)

**Rs.26-lakh aid for kin of suicide victims (20)**
NALGONDA, February 5, 2012: District Collector N. Mukteswara Rao on Saturday announced sanction of
a Rs.26-lakh package for 18 families of distressed farmers and handloom weavers who have committed
suicide. The rate of payment is Rs.1.5 lakh each for 12 farmers' families and Rs.50,000 each for the kith
and kin of six handloom weavers. The amounts will be handed over to the families at the Collectorate on
February 6 at 10 a.m. An official release said, Mr. Rao has solved the problem of non-provision of
assistance to these families since 2007 due to non-availability of funds and other reasons, by mobilising
funds from the Land Acquisition and other departments. The revenue inspectors have been asked to
send the families to the Collectorate on February 6. (The Hindu 5/2/12)

**HC satisfied with action on farmer suicides, disposes PIL (20)**
KOCHI: A public interest litigation seeking action to prevent farmer suicides in the state was disposed by
the Kerala high court on Tuesday. Considering the petition by advocate Basil Attipetty, division bench of acting chief justice Manjula Chellur and justice PR Ramachandra Menon ordered for disposal of the petition, expressing satisfaction in the steps adopted by the state and central governments. In the affidavit filed in response to the petition alleging spurt in suicides by debt-ridden farmers, the state government had informed the court that farmers of Wayanad, Palakkad, and Kasargod districts were included in the debt relief package introduced by the central government in 2006. The government had pointed out that there has been a decrease in number of farmer suicides in these three districts after their inclusion in the relief package. A total of Rs 3,318 crore was spent on debt relief, including measures to facilitate repayment of bank loans, the government had stated. Government had also told the court that amendment to debt relief laws are being planned to include more farmers under the purview of debt relief packages. While only those who applied before May 31, 2009 are part of the debt relief package, financial help will be extended to those who applied till October 31 last year, the government submitted. The government also stated that a special committee was formed under the chairmanship of commissioner of agricultural products. After visiting debt-ridden farmers and various political leaders, the committee has put forward suggestions to the government, and they are being implemented on a timely basis, the government had informed the court. The state government had informed the court that farmers of Wayanad, Palakkad, and Kasargod districts were included in the debt relief package introduced by the central government in 2006. (Times of India 8/2/12)

West Bengal faces agrarian crisis (20)

Kolkata: At Rasulpur village in the Bardhaman, countless hand-woven shacks, overflowing with paddy, dot stretches of farmland. Defying the prosperity, is the family of 45-year old Amiya Saha, a farmer, who walked up to his own paddy field in the wee hours of the new year to commit suicide by consuming pesticide. Steeped in debt, Saha had taken loans from multiple sources, including, Rs 6,000 from the nearby cooperative society for paddy and potato cultivation, but failed to sell even a fraction of the produce. In the last four months, at least 32 farmers have committed suicide in the state due to mounting debts. Dayal Chandra Burman, a villager in Malda, consumed pesticide on a Sunday afternoon after failing to repay Rs 30,000 he owed to a moneylender. More recently, 29-year-old Sheikh Mostafa, a sharecropper, committed suicide by consuming pesticide at Balkurua village in Howrah for a having failed to arrange Rs 1,200 to pay a tractor owner. It is not just loan sharks like doorstep moneylenders, but financial inclusion drive of banks and cooperative societies that has burdened farmers in Bengal with multiple debt. Kinkar Bagh, a potato farmer at Rajpur, had taken a loan of Rs 30,000 from a nearby village community and Rs 40,000 from a public sector bank last October for paddy cultivation. However, with not even half of the money realised from potato cultivation this year, Bagh is on the brink of bankruptcy. “It is not the fear of confiscation of property by banks, but the humiliation of defaulting that is bothering me,” says Bagh. After almost a two-year dry spell, West Bengal has produced a record 150,000 tonnes of paddy this year, almost 15 per cent more than the previous year. Critics are pointing fingers at the poor procurement policy of the new government that has led to the present crisis. This year government is set to procure 20,00,000 ton of rice and paddy, with of the paddy-130,00,000 tonne, expected to be trolled by rice mills or middlemen. In absence of funds, the pace of procurement had been slower than usual, and till the first week of January Benfed and Confed, the two state-run agencies for paddy procurement, did not lifted any stocks because they had not been allocated any cash. “Benfed will soon start operations,” said source at the state procurement agency. On the other hand, middlemen have little interest in buying paddy from Bengal, as better quality rice from neighbouring states of Jharkhand and Bihar have flooded the markets. As a result, the price of paddy in the domestic market has crashed to as low as Rs 850-900 per quintal, against the minimum support price of Rs 1,080 per quintal. In addition, fertilizer prices have doubled over the last one year, and the cost of paddy production has shot-up as high as Rs 1000 per quintal. Thus, for every quintal of paddy, farmers are suffering a loss of at least Rs 100. With the Bangladesh border sealed, movement of paddy and rice to Bangladesh has declined to almost zero. A bumper crop in Bangladesh has complicated the situation for Bengal's farmers. “There is no coordination among government agencies at the village level, self help gropus and elsewhere for paddy procurement. The government has also restricted the movement of rice to Bangladesh. This has led to the present crisis,” said Suryakanta Mishra is Leader of Opposition. What has further aggravated the problem is the new government policy to transfer support price directly into the farmers’ through account-payee cheque. The idea was to eliminate the intervention of middlemen in lifting paddy and forcing farmers to open bank accounts. However, now, not only farmers have to bear the cost...
of transportation of paddy themselves, but also are facing delays in getting payments. While many marginal farmers don't even have a bank account for encashing cheques. Those who have, cases of bounced cheques is not an aberration. "There are no buyers even for 5 kgs of rice. Those who formulate government policies should rise come from the framing background to know the woes of farmers," rue Anwar Hussain, a farmer Rusulpur village. "The government is not willing to buy what it should have bought in order to keep the market prices of paddy above the procurement price. Also, the new method of procurement has resulted in unnecessary delay for farmers to get the price of produce," says Dipankar Dasgupta, economist and former professor at the Indian Statistical Institute. Ironically, even as the government stepped up procurement efforts, there is little interest among farmers to sell the paddy. At noon, the procurement counter at the Daley Bazaar Union Cooperative Agriculture Society near Rusulpur is empty. With government procuring just one-fourth of the produce, farmers are reluctant to break their entire lot for selling a fraction. Rice mills are running out of space, and there are no buyers for the remaining paddy. "Farmers don't want to break the entire basket for selling one fourth of produce as there are no buyers for rest of the produce. There is no place for more paddy in rice mills," says an official at the society. Even as farmers are suffering losses, there is not much impact on the profitability of rice mill owners, as the losses are being compensated by profits in the by-product industry. For potato, too, price crash has been no less compelling. With the Punjab government providing transport subsidy to its farmers for excess potato production, at least 20,00,000 tonne of potato entered West Bengal in the month of December, potato price fell below the cost of production. Against the cost of production of 50 kg potato at Rs 180 kg, farmers were getting Rs 120, per 50 kg, or a loss of Rs 30 per kg. “Farmers were getting negative returns at cold storages after potato from Punjab came to West Bengal,” said Patit Paban De from West Bengal Cold Storage Association. Less than a year of the new government in West Bengal, and resentment runs deep in rural Bengal. “When you are at the top, you don’t see people at the bottom,” says Sheikh Abdul Mustar, a farmer at Rusulpur. Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, recently snubbed reports of farmers suicide as cases of personal distress, but a bewildered Asim Saha, brother of Amiya Saha, who committed suicide in Rusulpur a month ago, asks, “If we are not farmers, who are we? Let the chief minister come and investigate.” (Business standard 8/2/12)

Farmers take out bike rally seeking restitution of land (20)
Mysore: More than 150 farmers from Kochanahalli and surrounding villages in Nanjangud taluk took out a bike rally here on Monday, seeking restitution of land acquired from them for a golf course. Nearly 800 acres were acquired by the project promoters after promising the farmers “permanent employment”. But even four years later, there are neither signs of the project being implemented nor have the farmers been given jobs. The rally was supported by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), whose leaders led the protest. The farmers' agitation has been taking place for the last 30 days outside the Deputy Commissioner's office. On Monday, there was tension near the office as some farmers, peeved by the lack of response from the authorities, threatened to commit suicide. They were assuaged by the CITU leaders. Shashi Kumar, general secretary of CITU, said they were given a patient hearing by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, who said the issue had been brought to the notice of the Government. CITU had decided to take up the matter with Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda as neither Minister in charge of Mysore district S.A. Ramdas nor Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah had helped address their concerns. With rumours that the land acquired from them would be auctioned, the farmers intend to intensify their agitation in the days ahead. (The Hindu 14/2/12)

Farmer suicides: distraught families look to State Budget for help (20)
Bangalore, February 14, 2012: Twenty-year-old Junjamma from Bandukunte village was in her mother's home, expecting her second child, when she got news that her 25-year-old husband Tippeswamy, a small farmer, had committed suicide. He was unable to repay a loan of about Rs. 1 lakh owing to crop failure following poor rainfall. Ms. Junjamma was among the several widows and children who had come to the ‘Raithotsava’ here on Monday, organised by M.D. Nanjundaswamy Pratishtana, formed in memory of the late farmers' leader and founder of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha (KRRS). The families of the deceased farmers were here to appeal to Chief Minister D.V. Sadanada Gowda to pay special attention in the coming budget to families of farmers who had committed suicide. Sira taluk president of KRRS, Paramashivaiah, said that there had been 12 farmers' suicides in the taluk in the last one year, all following failure of the groundnut crop in un-irrigated land. Tippeswamy's mother, Gangamma, said that the family had taken a loan of Rs. 25,000 from Stree Shakti Sangha, Rs. 30,000 from a bank, and the
remaining as ‘kaisala’ (non-institutional loan). Twenty-year-old Puttaraju from Govindahalli from the same taluk, present at the event, said that his father Chikkalingappa had committed suicide as he had a loan of Rs. 50,000 that he could not repay. His groundnut crop on two acres of land had failed. Mr. Puttaraju and his two brothers — aged 18 and 14 — are not studying any more. “I work at the field and my mother and brothers go out to get daily-wage work,” said Mr. Puttaraju, who has done a job-oriented course (JOC) after completing his PUC. The KRRS demanded that the families of farmers who commit suicide should get reservation and widows should get a pension of at least Rs. 5,000 per month. They have also demanded that money be allocated for their welfare from the Chief Minister's Relief Fund. The organisation has sought help for the proposed Raitha Kalyana Kendra. Mr. Gowda said he would look into these demands before the budget, in consultation with farmers' leaders. At the event, Prof. M.D. Nanjundaswamy International Life Achievement Awards were presented to M.R. Shivaswamy, a doctor and farmers' leader from Tamil Nadu, and Olivier de Marcellus, an anti-nuclear and anti-imperialism activist. (The Hindu 14/2/12)

**Farmer suicides on the rise in West Bengal: CPI(M) (20)**
Kolkata, February 16, 2012: Alleging that incidents of farmers committing suicide in West Bengal are on the rise, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Thursday demanded that “proper compensation” be given to their families. “Altogether 32 farmers committed suicide in the State. The situation is grave, peasants can’t sell paddy. They are not getting work. The incidents of farmers committing suicide in the State are on the rise,” party’s (M) central committee member Shymal Chakrabarty said. Briefing the media on the second day of the 23rd State conference of the party, he demanded that families of farmers who committed suicide be given “proper compensation”. When pointed that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had denied reports of a rise in farmers’ suicide in the state, he said, “We challenge the government. She is not telling the truth.” Ms. Banerjee had earlier denied the reports and accused the CPI (M) of spreading canards against her government. The CPI(M) leader also said that arrangements should be made to purchase paddy directly from farmers in cash, as was done during the previous Left Front rule, and crop insurance be introduced, among other measures to help them. Alleging that the CPI(M) leaders and workers had become victims of terror across the State, he said, “sixty three CPI(M) members have been killed and there have been various instances of party leaders and workers being implicated in false cases. This is being done to suppress our party.” To a question, the CPI(M) leader reiterated that the policy of industrialisation of the State adopted by the previous Left Front government was correct, but admitted that in some cases, like Singur, land acquisition was made in haste without proper discussion with farmers. (The Hindu 16/2/12)

**Debt drives another farmer to suicide (20)**
BURDWAN: Ridden by debt, yet another farmer committed suicide at Nouhati village under Memari police station on Wednesday. Madhav Santra, 40, a share cropper, took pesticide due to debt burden and loss of crop in the field, his family claimed. On Wednesday afternoon, his wife and neighbours took him to Memari Grameen Hospital, where he died in the evening. A relative of the farmer, Raghab Santra alleged that Madhav had taken a loan of Rs 25,000 from the local cooperative society and Rs 10,000 from amahajan. He did not have his own land and used to cultivate four bighas as a share cropper. While he cultivated potato on two-and-a-half bighas, other vegetables like cucumber and pumpkin were grown on the remaining one and a half bighas. Madhav had suffered losses in the aman cultivation earlier. With the potato plants getting infected and poor growth of vegetables, Madhav's scope of financial recovery became bleak, claimed Raghab. His elder son Ujjwal Santra, 18, helped him with cultivation, while his elder daughter will appear for her Madhyamik examination this year. The younger daughter studies in class IX. The OC of Memari police station Sanjib Ghosh said that the villager had not died due to debt issues. It was because of family feud that he committed suicide. Burdwan SDO Pradip Acharya also refuted the allegations made by the victim’s family. “He was led to commit suicide due to a family feud. Despite that I have sent the BDO of Bhatar Amartya Chakraborty to his house. We are waiting for a detailed report,” he added. (Times of India 17/2/12)

**'Agitating farmers dubbed as Naxals in UP' (20)**
Ghaziabad, February 23, 2012: “If farmers fight for their rights in Uttar Pradesh, they are branded Naxals and showered with bullets,” Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi on Thursday lamented. At an election meeting here, he said that on the other hand builders are gifted lands worth crores of rupees at
throwaway prices. Rahul, who had championed the cause of farmers in Bhatta Parsaul village on Delhi outskirts, asked if it was a crime to agitate in support of a just demand? Bhatta Parsaul village near Greater Noida had last year emerged as the epicentre of the agitation by farmers demanding higher compensation for their land acquired by the Mayawati government. Accusing the BSP government of ignoring the plights of farmers, he said farmers are committing suicide, but the government is not doing anything for them. He said all the chief ministers of non-Congress parties have ruined the state and looted money, but the Congress would change the situation in UP in the next five years and would not rest till his mission was accomplished. (The Hindustan Times 23/2/12)

4,864 farmers committed suicide in MP (20)
Bhopal: A total of 4,864 farmers committed suicide in Madhya Pradesh in the last four years, Home Minister Uma Shankar Gupta said Thursday. In a reply to legislator Ramlal Rawat, the minister said of the 7,594 people who committed suicide in the state last year, 853 were farmers. The total included 1,107 labourers. In 2008, 1,379 farmers committed suicide. The number rose to 1,395 in 2009 and slipped to 1,237 in 2010. (Zee News 23/2/12)

76 farmers committed suicides in Vidarbha region last year: VJAS (20)
Nagpur, Feb 25 : There has been an alarming rise in farmers' suicides in cotton belt of Vidarbha region in the year 2011, claimed Vidarbha Janandolan Samiti (VJAS), while demanding immediate intervention of the Prime Minister's Office. In Yavatmal district, 76 farmers committed suicides in 2011, as against 35 in 2010, despite special package and loan waiver for them. Considering the grave situation, the VJAS has asked Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to provide a long-term solution to the crisis and integrated solution to Vidarbha's agrarian crisis. Due to agrarian crisis, 2,332 farmers had committed suicide since 2000 in Yavatmal district alone. Of them, only 714 were found eligible for the compensation, VJAS convenor Kishor Tiwari said in a release here today. Despite special package and loan waiver, nothing has changed on ground and dry land farmer has very little hope of getting a remunerative price in order to make agriculture a sustainable activity, he claimed. A 31-member Parliamentary Committee, headed by Vasudev Acharya, will visit the Vidarbha region from March 2, to study the issue and impact of special packages. The panel will visit Wardha, Yavatmal and Nagpur. (UNI) (New Kerala 25/2/12)

Now, parliamentary panel to study suicide crisis (20)
NAGPUR: A parliamentary standing committee will visit the farm suicide capital of Yavatmal on March 2. The 37-member committee, headed by Basudeo Acharya of CPM, will go to Pandharkawda and visit couple of villages to find out why farmers suicides continue unabated despite a plethora of measures taken by the government, providing relief to cotton growers of drylands of Vidarbha. This is the first time that such a large team of parliamentary committee will be visiting the region. The visit comes in the wake of reports that the actual number of farmers committing suicides and found eligible for compensation by the government has actually tripled last year. There are also reports that the government may consider yet another relief package for dry-land farmers whose economic plight has worsened in the last six years and the cases of loan defaults have recorded an alarming rise in the region. Another round of loan waiver can only make them eligible for fresh bank credits in the next kharif season. Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti, which is spearheading the cotton growers' cause for over a decade, will be meeting the standing committee members during the visit to Pandharkawda. The panel members will be taken to nearby villages of Bhamraj and Maregon to study the ground realities. "Several such studies have been undertaken in the past. We only hope that the fresh attempt of the government will succeed in identifying the problem and ways to address it," said Kishore Tiwari, VJAS president, on Saturday. He lamented that recommendation of high-profile reports of M S Swaminathan who headed the National Agriculture Commission and Prof Narendra Jadhav were never implemented. "In 2006, the CM-PM package of Rs 5000 crore was followed by a massive loan waiver in 2008. As part of Rs 70,000 crore covering several states, Vidarbha region got a share of Rs 6000 crore. In 2009, the state government extended the loan waiver facility. Planning commission experts also visited the region and gave their report. In effect, a dozen such committees may have studied the farm crisis in Vidarbha. But a lasting solution to make agriculture sustainable has evaded the authorities till date," said Tiwari. There are fresh worries that cotton farmers have fallen prey to monopolistic designs of multinational seed companies producing genetically modified seeds. (Times of India 26/2/12)
Interlinking major rivers will reduce farmer suicides: Study (20)
Chennai: The Supreme Court’s directive to the Union Government on Monday to interlink the major rivers in the country, if implemented, could take Indian economy to new heights, by increasing the agriculture production manifold and solving the drinking water shortage, says Suresh Prabhu, former chairman of the Task Force on Inter Linking of Rivers (ILR) set up by the NDA government. But Prof P M Natarajan, reputed hydrologist and Sambhu Kallolikar, secretary, Governor of Tamil Nadu are of the view that the interlinking of rivers would arrest the suicide of farmers all over the country. A study by the duo puts non availability of water as the root cause of the farmers’ suicide. “If water is made available at the milky stage of the crops, all problems faced by the farmers could be solved,” said Prof Natarajan. “The perennial problems of draught and flood which ravage the country on an yearly basis will be a thing of the past if all major rivers in the country are inter linked. By inter linking the rivers, what we do is to transfer the surplus flood waters from Brahmaputra Mahanadi, Ganga and Godavari to water deficient rivers in south India through a network of canals. This will help us in boosting our agricultural production, increase the forest cover and bring down pollution,” said Prabhu, a chartered accountant and former union minister for power, told DNA. Prabhu held more than 3000 meetings all over the country and convinced all the chief ministers about the importance of the project. “Though we submitted a comprehensive report to the government in 2004, no action has been taken on it till date,” said Prabhu. He said the inter linking of rivers would solve all interstate disputes like the Cauvery and Mullaperiyar issues. Dr S Kalyanaraman, former director, Asian Development Bank, who undertook 20 years research on ILR is of the view that the project would help in generating 40,000 MW clean and green energy. “We can bring in nine crore acres of additional wetland into farming and this will benefit 45 crore people,” said Dr Kalyanaraman. The normal annual Indian surface water resources are about 68,969 TMC (Thousand Million Cubic feet). Out of this we use only 8,814 TMC, that is 13 per cent. The remaining 87 per cent, (that is about 60,155 TMC), is wasted into the sea every year, say Natarajan and Kallolikar. “The value of one TMC of flood water let into sea in terms of paddy and pulses is about Rs 32.5 crores. The total irrigation potential that can be created by utilizing the entire floodwater let into sea is 241 million ha, the production of food grain is 1,477 million tones (1,326 million tones of paddy plus 151 million tones of pulse) and the value of total flood water in terms of paddy and pulses is about Rs. 20 lakh crores (value of paddy is Rs. 13 lakh crores and the value of pulse is Rs. 7 lakh crores) per annum. The value of food grains wasted in the last 61 years in the independent India is Rs.1, 220 lakh crores,” Natarajan and Kallolikar said in the paper they submitted to the Planning Commission emphasizing the need to interlink the Indian rivers. Prof Natarajan said that if the flood waters of Godavari River in Andhra Pradesh is diverted to Mettur Dam in Tamil Nadu, the Dam would get filled in ten hours. “Tamil Nadu’s sentire irrigation requirements could be met with this water,” he said. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has drawn out a blue print for implementing the project with the help of images collected from the Remote Sensing and Cartosat satellites launched by it in 2007 and 2008. Though the UPA government which came to power in 2004 had included the interlinking of peninsular Indian rivers as one of the top priorities in its Common Minimum Programme nothing was heard about it afterwards. (DNA 27/2/12)

Sule champions group farming (20)
PUNE: Baramati MP Supriya Sule has appealed to the state government to form a firm policy on group farming. Compared to setting up a cooperative society of farmers, it is easier to form a group of farmers for producing one particular crop or fruit, she said. Sule was in the city on Monday to discuss group farming with farmers and agricultural experts. She later issued an official communication stressing the need for urgent action for group farming. Sule said, “In the last seven-eight months, the district agriculture department has set up 4,000 groups in the district and 80,000 farmers have been connected through it. At the initial level, these groups will be working on fruit processing, mainly custard apple. Purandar taluka is leading in terms of custard apple production and processing.” Due to the small size of their land holdings, small or marginal farmers are not able to produce anything on a large scale. If they come together and form a group, the government can recognise them and provide facilities like pesticides, equipment, fertilizers. Moreover, joint efforts will reduce labour charges per head. All the costs will be shared and production cost would be lower, she said. If the government revises its existing funding of Rs one lakh per farmer and provides funds directly to the group, the total requirement would be lower and lead to savings in government’s funds, Sule said. “Some farmers cannot avail loans due to the smaller size of their land holdings. But with group farming, there will be more land under cultivation of a single crop. This would increase the creditworthiness of farmers in the bank and the group can avail bigger loans from the
Farmers should also explore alternative sources of income: CM (20)

Hyderabad, March 4: Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, has urged farmers to explore alternative sources of income from allied sectors. With the implementation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the availability of labour in the agricultural sector was a great cause for concern, he said. “We have already urged the Centre to extend the MNREG scheme partly to agriculture works also,” he added. Calling for consistency in policies for the benefit of farmers, Mr Reddy said frequent changes were putting them at a disadvantage. The Chief Minister was speaking at the inaugural function of AP-TEC 2012, organised by the CII-APTDC, Central and State Governments, with the theme “Enhancing and optimising agricultural value chains”. Mr Reddy sought collaboration between the industry and farmers for ensuring remunerative prices to the latter. He emphasised the need for promoting mechanisation in agriculture for enhancing growth and productivity.

Mr V. Nagi Reddy, Principal Secretary – Agriculture & Co-operation, AP said agriculture had transformed from subsistence to commercial. In this context, farmers are increasingly feeling that agriculture was not a profitable sector. The State Government is implementing an interest free loan scheme to farmers for ensuring better credit to the farmers. Dr William D. Dar, Philippines, Director General, ICRISAT felt that developing countries should focus on an inclusive market development model to ensure better returns to the farmers. Promoting value chains in public-private partnership model and institutional insurance mechanisms are needed for ensuring growth in the sector, he said. Earlier, Mr Anil Kumar V Epur, Past-Chairman, CII Southern Region, said that public private partnership was necessary for the growth of the agriculture sector. AP–TEC 2012 also featured an exhibition where some of the big corporations such as JCB, John Deere, Jain Irrigation, Finolex Plasson Pvt Ltd, Coromandel International Ltd, Tata Steel Ltd, VST Tillers, Mahindra & Mahindra, Crystal Group etc took part. (Business Line 4/3/12)

3 more farmers commit suicide in Kerala (20)

Kozhikode, Mar 5: Apparently distressed over agrarian crisis, three more farmers allegedly committed suicide in Wayanad and Kozhikode districts of Kerala in the last 48 hours. Police said Mundakkal Joseph (60) of Vayalalam near Balussery in the district, who consumed poison, died in the Kozhikode Medical College yesterday noon. Appukkuttan (65) of Moovayal in Wayanad committed suicide by jumping into a well yesterday morning. In the third incident, body of Ratheesh (37) of Padippurakkal at Athirattukunnu in Wayanad was found hanging from a tree on March 3. Their relatives claimed the farmers took the extreme step for their inability to repay agricultural loan taken from different agencies due to crop failure. Altogether, 22 farmers ended their lives due to the same reason in Wayanad alone since April last, farmers organisations said. (UNI) (New Kerala 5/3/12)

State govt, spends Rs 10,000 cr subsidy on fertilizers (20)

Guntur, Mar 4: Andhra Pradesh agriculture minister Kanna Lakshminarayana today said the state government was spending Rs 10,000 crore as subsidy on fertilizers and assured all kinds of assistance to farmers. Addressing a programme, he said in 2004, the subsidy on fertilizers was only Rs 1,900 crore. Now, it was Rs 10,000 crore. Urging farmers not to take extreme steps, he said steps had been taken to disburse compensation to farmers, who had committed suicide, unable to bear crop loss. The minister reiterated that the government was giving top priority to agriculture sector and committed to extend all required help to farmers. (UNI) (New Kerala 5/3/12)

Mumbai edit: Don’t deprive the farmers (20)

The spread of the farm crisis to Marathwada and Khandesh, detailed in a series of reports published in this newspaper, should set the alarm bells ringing in the corridors of power in Mantralaya. So far, Vidarbha had been synonymous with farmer suicides in Maharashtra and, indeed, in the country. The spread of the problem to other regions is cause for worry. This year, Marathwada has overtaken Vidarbha in the number of farmer suicides. This is a dubious distinction that the politicians of the region and the state should be ashamed of. The primary cause of the crisis is, not surprisingly, the lopsided developmental priorities of successive governments in the state, with undue emphasis on safeguarding the interests of one particular region, to the detriment of all other regions that lack political muscle. For far too long have the state’s rulers provided lip service to the cause of all-round development while pandering to their own vote bases. While the distribution of resources may well reflect political realities, it is certainly...
not a healthy situation. Sooner or later, the spread of the agrarian crisis will begin to hurt the state’s economy. The dominant political class must realise that this situation is not in its own long-term interest either. One particular region, no matter how populous or prosperous, cannot appropriate all the resources of the state. (DNA 6/3/12)

Debt sparks farmer suicide (20)
Calcutta, March 12: A farmer in South 24-Parganas’ Canning committed suicide after failing to repay a loan of Rs 10,000. Relatives said Mir Naskar, 52, had not got the minimum support price of Rs 1,080 for a quintal of paddy. Last night, Naskar, a resident of Sundipukuria village, consumed pesticide. District authorities said 11 farmers had committed suicide since the new government came to power in May last year. “Naskar had borrowed Rs 10,000 from a moneylender eight months ago. After the deadline for repaying the loan lapsed, the moneylender began pestering him. He was depressed for the past few days,” the farmer’s wife, Lakshmirani, said. When she got up early this morning, she saw that Naskar was not in bed. After waiting for some time, Lakshmirani asked her son Tapan to find out where Naskar was. Tapan found him lying near the family’s paddy field. Naskar was rushed to Canning sub-divisional hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. Shyamal Mondal, the local Trinamul MLA and Sunderbans development affairs minister, claimed Naskar’s suicide was not related to farm distress. “He had a one-bigha plot on which he cultivated crops sometimes. I have heard he had taken money for his daughter’s wedding, not for cultivation. I have told the sub-divisional officer of Canning to conduct an inquiry and submit a report.” The CPM criticised the government for “refusing to accept” that farmers were committing suicide. “The government refuses to admit that farmers are committing suicide after failing to get the right price for paddy. Our Krishak Sabha representative will visit Naskar’s home tomorrow to see how we can help the family. We demand that the government give a job to a member of the family of each farmer who has committed suicide,” CPM district secretary Sujan Chakraborty said. District magistrate N.S. Nigam said he had instructed the Canning SDO to conduct a probe to “find out the exact circumstances under which the farmer took his life”. (Telegraph 13/3/12)

Farmers take out bike rally seeking restitution of land (20)
MYSORE, February 14, 2012: More than 150 farmers from Kochanahalli and surrounding villages in Nanjangud taluk took out a bike rally here on Monday, seeking restitution of land acquired from them for a golf course. Nearly 800 acres were acquired by the project promoters after promising the farmers “permanent employment”. But even four years later, there are neither signs of the project being implemented nor have the farmers been given jobs. The rally was supported by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), whose leaders led the protest. The farmers’ agitation has been taking place for the last 30 days outside the Deputy Commissioner’s office. On Monday, there was tension near the office as some farmers, peeved by the lack of response from the authorities, threatened to commit suicide. They were assuaged by the CITU leaders. Shashi Kumar, general secretary of CITU, said they were given a patient hearing by the Additional Deputy Commissioner, who said the issue had been brought to the notice of the Government. CITU had decided to take up the matter with Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda as neither Minister in charge of Mysore district S.A. Ramdas nor Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah had helped address their concerns. With rumours that the land acquired from them would be auctioned, the farmers intend to intensify their agitation in the days ahead. (The Hindu 14/3/12)

Bt cotton and farmers’ suicide not linked: Joshi (20)
Mumbai: Protesting farmers from Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, led by activist Sharad Joshi, on Tuesday strongly contested any linkage between Bt cotton and farmers suicide in this cotton belt. The cotton growers during their protest here also opposed the visit of a Parliamentary committee on Agriculture to the region. Joshi told reporters that they have complained to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar about the visit of Parliamentary committee on Agriculture led by Basudeb Acharya. Some eminent farm scientists including C D Mayee, President of Indian Society for Cotton Improvement and N Seetharama, executive director, ABLE-AG, also joined the protesting farmers. (Business Standard 14/3/12)

Many injured as cops, farmers clash in Kota (20)
JAIPUR: Five policemen and nearly half-a-dozen farmers were injured in a clash at Bhamashah Krishi
Upaj Mandi (BKUM) in Kota on Wednesday. Following the death of a ‘mandi’ accountant in the afternoon, farmers and accountants resorted to a violent protest against BKUM office bearers. They allegedly attacked the association's secretary Jawahar Lal Nagar and additional secretary Narendra Kumar Swarnkar. They even set fire to Swarnkar’s car. When the police tried to intervene, the villagers allegedly threw stones at them. The cops lathicharged the crowd which left around five policemen and several farmers injured. Kota city circle officer Chandrasheel Thakur said, "In the stone-pelting, five constables suffered injuries. We dispersed the crowd using mild force." The police later had to call Rapid Action Force to disperse the protesters. Thakur said there had been a dispute over an internal matter in the mandi, but the situation worsened after the death of accountant Pappu Punia. Kota (south) MLA Om Birla alleged corrupt practices like selling leftover grains illegally are rampant in the mandi. "Last evening, Punia had an argument with mandi guards when he tried to stop them from taking out the leftover grains illegally after the transactions were completed. The guards could be selling it in the shops outside the mandi illegally," alleged Birla. Punia was also threatened of dire consequences, claimed Birla. Sources said following the argument, Punia complained of chest pain at night and was rushed to a private hospital where he died while undergoing treatment. The agitating farmers and accountants have demanded a compensation of Rs10 lakh for Punia’s family. (Times of India 15/3/12)

Farm activists see too little for Vidarbha (20)

NAGPUR: Farm activists and experts saw too little relief for Vidarbha farmers in the Budget Pranab Mukherjee presented on Friday. "There is nothing in it for the dry-land farmers" said Vijay Jawandhiya, a Shetkari Sanghatana founder-member. "The Rs300 crore allocated in the new budget for irrigation projects in the region is just peanuts. In 2006 under PM package, Rs2,100 crore was provided for it but that hardly made any difference to Vidarbha." Jawandhiya pointed out. "Farmers in irrigated areas get huge subsidies to the tune of Rs16,000 per acre. We were expecting a direct subsidy to the distressed dry land Vidarbha farmer driven to suicide. But nothing of that sort came through Budget proposals," said Kishore Tiwari of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti ( VJAS). "This budget is as bad as earlier ones. Our demand to lift restrictions on cotton export, a bailout package for dying cotton farmers and rehabilitation of 10,000 farm widows has been ignored completely," Tiwari said. Though Tiwari welcomed the relief in interest rate rebate on crop loan, he said hardly 5% cotton farmers can take advantage of this because of severe crop loss rendering them with poor resources to repay loans and be eligible for fresh crop loan from banks. Jawandhiya said the budget was aimed at making poor poorer and the rich richer as it failed to increase allocation for edible oil, pulses crops and also did not specify how much would be provided for MGREGA scheme. While BJP MP from Chandrapur Hansraj Ahir called the idea of direct subsidy to farmers an eye wash, former state agriculture minister Ranjit Deshmukh said the union Budget had several proposals favouring farmers like Rs300 grant for Vidarbha irrigation schemes, increase in farm lending, duty relief on farm implements and creation of grain storing capacity. City MP Vilas Muttemwar hailed the Budget as the best one possible in the prevailing situations of global slowdown. "It will revive the Indian economy," he said. Rs300 crore for irrigation, hike in farm lending from 1 lakh crore to 5.75 lakh crore, Rs 1 lakh crore for social security, bigger outlay for education and rural schools will all help the backward Vidarbha farmer, said Muttemwar. State food and civil supplies minister Anil Deshmukh said the Budget was all-encompassing and provided relief to most sections of the society. (Times of India 17/3/12)

Farmers upbeat about vermicomposting (20)

KODAIKANAL, March 19, 2012: With organic farming and application of natural manure gaining momentum among horticulturists and farmers to protect land and make agricultural produce chemical free, production of vermicompost, too has become a profit making venture among farmers in the hill station. Organic farming not only ensures pollution free farm produce but also helps scale down production cost considerably. Aiding this is the vermicompost organic manure, which has been found to be good for horticulture crops like fruits, vegetables, flowers and upkeep of lawns, as the manure does not leach from the soil during heavy rainfall. It also improves the humus content and develops the water retaining capacity of the soil. Organic farming system has been designed to enhance the biological diversity. It increases soil biological activity, maintains long term fertility, recycles the waste, relying on renewable sources in locally organised system and promotes healthy use of soil, water and air and minimising all forms of pollution, said Raja Mohamed, Deputy Director of Horticulture (Central Schemes). Organic farming has been adopted widely for perennial and non-perennial crops. The National
Horticulture Mission has been offering 50 per cent of total project costs as subsidy for setting up vermicompost unit, he added. (The Hindu 20/3/12)

**Congress, stages walk-out over not waiving farmers' loan (20)**

Bhopal, Mar 21: The BJP government was today put in a piquant situation in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly and the opposition Congress staged a walk-out when Cooperative Minister Gaurishankar Bisen said the government was yet to approve party promise for waiving loan of farmers. Mr Arif Aqueel(Cong), during Question Hour, sought details of those farmers who were benefitted by BJP promise to waive loan up to Rs 50,000 of each farmer. The opposition was agitated over Mr Bisen's reply and they were not pacified by Industry Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya's assurance to remind Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan about the issue. The Congress members, who resorted to slogan shouting, alleged the BJP government has failed to solve the problems of farmers and staged a walkout. Mr Aqueel also wanted to know the number of debt-ridden farmers who committed suicide claiming a farmer of Hata block in Damoh district Bhagwandas Patel, who committed suicide by consuming pesticide on January 30 this year. He also contended that the state's farmers owed about Rs 4000 crore to different banks and Rs 231 crore to the Irrigation department. (UNI) (New Kerala 21/3/12)

**Farmers have lost their standing in society, says peasant leader (20)**

ONGOLE, March 21, 2012: It is not just members of other sections of society who do not want to give their daughters in marriage to farmers. "We too are unwilling to ask our daughters to marry fellow farmers as we cannot lead a dignified life in the present hostile situation," according to Andhra Pradesh Farmers' Federation president Yerneni Nagendranath. Gone were the days when farmers were treated with respect along with soldiers and hailed as 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan'. Despite working hard, farmers were being looked down upon and many of them ended up committing suicide, Mr. Nagendranath said while taking part in a farmers' roundtable here on Tuesday. Referring to the latest spate of suicide by farmers in Burdwan district, considered the rice bowl of West Bengal, he said, "Unrealistic calculation of MSP is proving to be a hangman's noose for farmers in the country." "The plight of the peasants is not just because of natural calamities. It is because of the wrong policies of the Union and State governments, which prefer to protect the interests of consumers, industrialists, and other sections at the cost of farmers," he said. While other sections of people were allowed to include profit before selling and fix maximum retail price (MRP), it was only the peasants who, many a time, were forced to part with their produce at a price below the MSP. "Year after year farmers are forced to resort to distress sale with market forces knocking away whatever little profit due to them," he lamented. He exhorted the farmers to get ready for a "do-or-die" battle as it was a question of "life and death" for them. He called for a united struggle to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the National Commission for Farmers headed by noted agriculture scientist M.S. Swaminathan, which were "gathering dust at Krishi Bhavan in New Delhi." (The Hindu 21/3/12)

**Vidarbha farmers, widows to 'mourn' decade of BT cotton (20)**

Nagpur, March 25: Thousands of farmers and farm widows shall 'mourn' and protest the tenth anniversary of the introduction of US-based GM Seed's revolutionary "BT Cotton" in the country Monday, an activist group said here Sunday. "Tomorrow, thousands of farmers and farmland widows shall protest in various towns and villages across Vidarbha against BT Cotton, which failed in 400,000 hectares since 2005 and in 4.20 million hectares this year," Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS) chief Kishor Tiwari told IANS. The VJAS has been fighting the cause of Maharashtra farmers opposed to BT cotton, which, Tiwari claimed is the root cause of farmers' suicides claiming over 10,000 lives so far in the state. Farmers will gather in two of the worst suicide-prone villages - Hiwara and Bothbudan - demanding suspension of all commercial trials of BT Cotton in the dry regions of the Vidarbha region of eastern Maharashtra and banning GM cotton in the country. "Vidarbha is a classic example of a wrong selection of GM technology in dry regions since BT Cotton requires proper irrigation facilities that are lacking here," Tiwari pointed out. When the permission was granted by India ten years ago, experimental cultivation of BT cotton was started in 10,000 hectares in different parts of the country. "Today, it has gone to over 12 million hectares, especially after Maharashtra permitted commercial cultivation trials of BT cotton from June 2005," said Tiwari. He said the VJAS has demanded a special discussion by parliament on cotton farmers crises since the past ten years of BT cotton and setting up of a special parliamentary committee to inquire into the mess created by BT cotton. In a report released Sunday, a group of NGOs under the banner of
‘Coalition for GM-free India’ has claimed that the government’s own data proved that BT cotton has resulted in stagnant yields, pest resistance and evolution of new pest and disease attacks. “The real yield gains in the past decade, from 278 kg/hectare to 470 kg/hectare was seen between 2001-2005 when BT cotton accounted for only 5.6 percent of the total cotton cultivation area. After that, till 2012, when the BT cotton area covered 90 percent of the total cotton cultivation area, the yield noticed was 470 kg/hectare to only 481 kg/hectare,” Kiran Vissa, co-convenor of Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture, said in the study report. (IANS) (New Kerala 25/3/12)

Ministry blames bt cotton for farmer suicides (20)
New Delhi, March 26, 2012: India’s Bt cotton dream is going terribly wrong. For the first time, farmer suicides, including those in 2011-12, have been linked to the declining performance of the much hyped genetically modified (GM) variety adopted by 90% of the country’s cotton-growers since being allowed a decade Policymakers have hailed Bt cotton as a success story but a January 9 internal advisory, a copy of which is with HT, sent out to cotton-growing states by the agriculture ministry presents a grim scenario. “Cotton farmers are in a deep crisis since shifting to Bt cotton. The spate of farmer suicides in 2011-12 has been particularly severe among Bt cotton farmers,” says the advisory. Bt cotton’s success, it appears, lasted merely five years. Since then, yields have been falling and pest attacks going up. India’s only GM crop has been genetically altered to destroy cotton-eating pests. For farmers, rising costs — in the form of pesticides — have not matched returns, pushing many to the brink, financially and otherwise. Simply put, Bt cotton is no more as profitable as it used to be. “In fact cost of cotton cultivation has jumped…due to rising costs of pesticides. Total Bt cotton production in the last five years has reduced,” says the advisory. This could have larger implications for Asia’s third-largest economy where rural prosperity has been a key driver of overall growth. The note is based on observations from the Indian Council of Agricultural Sciences, which administers farm science, and the Central Cotton Research Institute, the country’s top cotton research facility. Yet, officials HT spoke to either denied or downplayed the advisory. Swapan Kumar Dutta, India’s deputy director-general of crop science, said he had no knowledge of the note and that Bt cotton continued to drive India’s cotton production. He could neither “confirm nor deny” that such a note had been sent, said Prabeer Kumar Basu, the agriculture secretary. Of the nine cotton-growing states, Maharashtra has seen the largest number of farmer suicides. In the state’s Vidarbha region, a cotton-growing belt comprising six districts, 209 farmers committed suicides in 2011 due to “agrarian causes”. In February 2010, the environment ministry put an indefinite moratorium on Bt brinjal, India’s first GM food crop, days after the country’s biotech regulator cleared it for cultivation. Among many reasons, the ministry said it was “necessary to review” the performance of Bt cotton first. (Hindustan Times 26/3/12)

Message to CM from unploughed fields (20)
Calcutta, March 31: Farmers in Bengal left around 2.8 lakh hectares uncultivated in the just-concluded boro crop season, a silent expression of no-confidence in the state government’s paddy procurement process and a fallout of rising fertiliser prices. The area cultivated in the boro season (January to end-February) can be considered a barometer for man-made farming systems because farmers largely depend on irrigation during this phase. The bigger aman crop (June to August) still remains a gamble in the monsoon. This year’s boro season figures do not reciprocate the soaring rhetoric employed by the Mamata Banerjee government while swearing by farmers. A report drawn up by the state agriculture department revealed that the state had fallen short of its cultivation target (see chart). “The state had fixed a target of cultivating 14 lakh hectares during the boro season. But the latest report shows that about 11.2 lakh hectares (a shortfall of about 20 per cent) were cultivated during the season,” said a senior official of the state agriculture department. “Reports sent by all the districts — except West Midnapore — mentioned that the target of cultivating plots in the boro season wasn’t achieved because farmers did not get the right price for their produce (aman) during the last monsoon and also because of a hike in prices of agricultural inputs like fertilisers,” another official said. The officials said no immediate impact was expected on the supply of foodgrain in the state. However, the Trinamul government is unlikely to miss the political message from the uncultivated swathes as it prepares for the panchayat polls next year. The Mamata government has been putting all its eggs in the rural basket of late, repeatedly suggesting that as long as it can carry along the ma-maati-manush constituency, it is not too bothered about the opinion of others. The government has also been denying that something is amiss in the farmlands of Bengal, some areas of which have reported suicides linked to procurement problems. But the boro statistics do suggest
that all’s not well with the farmers. Besides, if the coming monsoon crop falls short, the impact would eventually tell on grain supply. “We generally produce 150 lakh tonnes of rice every year, while our consumption requirement is 135 lakh tonnes. In the aman season, we produce about 110 lakh tonnes of rice. The shortfall of about 25 lakh tonnes is made up through the boro crop, the production of which hovers around 40-45 lakh tonnes,” said an official. “But the aman crop is totally dependent on rainfall. If rainfall is not adequate, the aman is bound to be hit. Then it could affect food security.” In the boro season of 2009-10, the state had nearly achieved the target of cultivating 14 lakh hectares. But last year, in the 2010-11 cycle, the state had failed to achieve the target because of a drought-like situation. This year, although there was no drought, the cultivated area fell short of even last year’s coverage by over 1 lakh hectares…. (Telegraph 1/4/12)

KVK promoting organic farming in a big way (20)
KANNUR, April 2, 2012: A group-based learning process called Farmers Field School has been effectively utilised by the Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), Kannur, under Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) to promote organic farming among farmers. According to KVK officials, the activities of the school, started in January this year to encourage organic farming of vegetables among the farmers, include experimental learning which helps them understand the practical aspects of organic farming. The activities are simple experiments, regular field observations, and group analysis of organic farming practices, said KVK head and Professor K. Abdul Kareem. In this cyclic learning process, farmers develop the expertise that enabled them to make their own organic crop management decisions, he said. The experiment has been conducted in two acres of land at Paravoor in Kadannappally-Panappuzha panchayat in the district by 20 enthusiastic young farmers of the Star Self-Help Group under the technical guidance of the KVK. The experimental plot has been divided into two, organic and inorganic. “The key characteristics of organic farming practices are maintaining organic matter levels by addition of organic manure at the rate of 12 tonnes a hectare and thereby encouraging soil biological activity,” Dr. Kareem said adding that soil acidity correction by adding lime enabled higher availability of nutrients and sustainable growth of micro flora in soil. Nutrient self-sufficiency was ensured through the use of bio-fertilizers, phosphate solubilising bacteria, and potash mobilising bacteria for efficient utilisation of phosphorus and potassium from soil, he said. In the inorganic plot, chemical fertilizers and pesticides were applied as per recommendations in packages of practices of the KAU. According Dr. Kareem, the organic crop exhibited slow growth at initial stages to pick up later, while plants in the inorganic plot were healthy at initial stages but withered with higher pest and diseases at later stages. The harvest of the crops was done on March 29 in a jubilant atmosphere. T. Sulaja, grama panchayat president, inaugurated the harvesting of vegetables. The learning experience was imparted to a large number of farmers. (The Hindu 2/4/12)

Politics over suicides in Andhra Pradesh (20)
Hyderabad: It is turning out to be a clear case of playing dirty politics over the dead in Andhra Pradesh in general and Telangana in particular. The "trend" started with farmers’ suicide in the early 2000s and touched a feverish pitch after the death of then Chief Minister in September 2009. Since December 2009 it is the Telangana issue around which the bizarre "suicide" saga has been revolving. Till the recent by-elections to six Assembly seats in the region, Telangana protagonists went to town claiming 700 students and youths "sacrificed" their lives for the cause of a separate state. Barely ten days after the elections, this figure mysteriously swelled to 850. None of the main parties that are claiming to be fighting for Telangana state has any accurate data to substantiate their claims. "They say 700 and we are going by that number," Telugu Desam Telangana Forum leader Motkupalli Narasimulu said today even as he blamed TRS chief K Chandrasekhar Rao for the growing number of suicides. Bharatiya Janata Party state president G Kishan Reddy put the "toll" at 750 while Telangana Rashtra Samiti, a self-styled torch-bearer of the statehood movement says the number is “800 plus”.Last week in Parliament, while stalling the House on the statehood demand, MPs from Telangana lamented the indifference of the Central government despite suicide by 600 students and youths for a separate state. But none has a record of all these suicides, whatever be the number, to prove their claims. For the record, state Home Minister P Sabita Indra Reddy informed the Legislative Council during the just-concluded Budget session that 316 persons committed suicide supposedly in the name of Telangana in the last couple of years. (Indian Express 3/4/12)

Guar is replacing cotton in Punjab (20)
CHANDIGARH: Amid reports of diminishing returns from cotton crop due to fall in prices and rising production cost despite Bt crops, farmers of Punjab have started leaning towards growing guar crop whose seed could fetch around Rs 23,000 per quintal price. "Cotton crop sowing has come down from about 5.6 lakh hectares to around 5 lakh hectares," Punjab's principal secretary of agriculture department Gurinderjit Singh Sandhu told The Times of India. A lot of farmers are now turning to guar crop as its use in food processing, pharmaceutical and oil exploration industry is increasing and fuelling demand for guar gum. However, an assurance of 35 lakh packets of Bt cotton has been taken from the companies. Punjab may require around 25 lakh packets of Bt cotton seed this year. The Bhartiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Bhupinder Singh Mann also said fluctuation of price of cotton is pushing farmers to guar cultivation. India is a major guar producer along with parts of Punjab province of Pakistan. The crops till a few years ago was used as a cattle feed. The northwest India led by Rajasthan was growing 80% of world's crop. Rajasthan is a major player with both Haryana and Punjab also benefiting the new-found market for the crop. (Times of India 5/4/12)

State to promote organic farming (20)
GUWAHATI, April 5 – The State Government has sketched out a mission to encourage organic farming and it is being launched this year. Funds for implementing the mission named Chief Minister’s Organic Farming Mission would not be a problem, said Agriculture Minister Nilamoni Sen Deka. He was inaugurating a review meeting organised by his department on bringing green revolution to the NE region here today. The minister also released the crop sequence list and crop calendar in the function. The minister said that the Government has also proposed expansion in the size of the area under hybrid paddy cultivation from the present 2.4 per cent to 20 per cent. With the amplified size of the area under hybrid paddy cultivation, the amount of rice being produced by the State is expected to be up by around 25 lakh metric tonnes over its existing quantity of production. Thus the total rice production of the State is expected to reach around 78.30 lakh metric tonnes. Deka said that integrated farming would be encouraged through a new scheme for developing model gaon panchayats. To resist indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, the State would soon announce its fertiliser policy and to prevent use of farming land for other purposes, the State would also adopt a land use policy. The process to prepare the land use policy is on, he said. He made an appeal to the officers of the Agriculture Department to espouse a competitive approach for competing with the other States. To look into the problems in marketing the produce of the State's farmers, the Agriculture Department is teaming up with the Food and Civil Supplies and Cooperation Departments. A joint team of the officials of the three departments will tour the entire State to assess the situation. The team will visit Andhra Pradesh on April 8. It will also visit Chhattisgarh and Punjab after the Rongali Bihu in this connection. While the Agricultural Marketing Board has been asked to procure paddy produced by the State farmers, the Chief Minister has announced a high-level committee to look into the problems faced by the farmers in selling their produce, the minister said. (The Assam Tribune 6/4/12)

Milma chief vows to protect dairy farmers (20)
MALAPPURAM, April 12, 2012: Milma is duty-bound to ensure that none of its dairy farmers will be driven to commit suicide, said Milma managing director K.T. Thomas. He was inaugurating a South Indian management meet titled 'Mesmerize 2012' organised by the Department of Management Studies at M.E.S. College of Engineering, Kuttippuram, on Wednesday. Mr. Thomas said Milma would protect the interests of dairy farmers by offering them good prices for their products. “Thus they will be goaded to continue in the field of dairy farming,” he said. MES State general secretary P.O.J. Lebba presided over the function. Former MES State president K.K. Abroobacker, MES director K.P. Mohammed, Principal H. Abdul Salam, Department of Management Studies head Saji Kuriakose, and programme patron K.P. Jabir Moosa spoke at the management meet. M.K. Biju welcomed the gathering. P.K. Jaisal proposed a vote of thanks. About 500 MBA students from 50-odd management schools in South India are attending the two-day conference. Two dozen papers on modern business methods were presented at the meet on Wednesday. (The Hindu 12/4/12)

Maharashtra to review purchase tax on cotton, oilseeds (20)
Mumbai, April 15: Cotton and oilseeds traders in Maharashtra can breath easy. The State Government has decided to put on hold the 5 per cent purchase tax which was announced on these commodities in the State Budget. The Finance Minister of Maharashtra, Mr Ajit Pawar, on Friday said that in view of the persistent demands from industry associations and farmers’ representatives, the Budget announcement
proposing to levy the tax would be reviewed. The new tax was vehemently opposed by farmers in the Vidarbha region, which has seen a number of cases of cotton farmers committing suicide. Local farmers’ bodies such as the Vidarbha Janandolan Samiti had launched an agitation against the tax. Mr Pawar said in the Legislative Assembly that the State Government would also be giving a set-off on tax collected from the sale of oil cakes. The decision to withhold the tax was taken considering the well-being of the farmers, he added. Mr Pawar also announced a 7.5 per cent reduction in VAT on beedis and unprocessed tobacco. In the Budget, a VAT of 12.5 per cent was levied on beedis, while 20 per cent VAT was on tobacco. He said that the decision to reduce the tax was taken following pleas from beedi workers. The workers’ representatives said that the tax could have an adverse effect on the daily wages of workers at beedi and tobacco factories. Responding to the workers’ representation, the State Government has decided to reduce the taxes with immediate effect, he announced in the Assembly. (Business Line 15/4/12)

Rs.3,804 crore allotted for agriculture: Minister (20)
THEINI, April 15, 2012: Top priority had been given to the agriculture sector and the State government had allotted Rs.3,804 crore for implementing various schemes for agriculturists, said Finance Minister O. Panneerselvam. Presiding over a farmers’ festival at Srirengapuram near Bodinaickanur on Saturday, he said that equal importance was being to the education sector also. The focus was to enhance agriculturists’ income. A Government Engineering College would start functioning at Metasokkanathapuram from the ensuing academic year. Initially it would function in a rented building and will be shifted to own buildings soon. The government had allotted Rs.94 crore for constructing the building and providing infrastructure. Most of the schemes were chalked out keeping in mind poorest of the poor and people living in remote villages. All schemes were fully useful to people living below poverty line, the Minister said. Collector K.S. Palanisamy said that farmers should implement recent technological developments in agriculture to boost food production using less water, less fertilizers and pesticides and improve productivity. (The Hindu 15/4/12)

Rebuked over debt, farmer ends life (20)
Burdwan, April 15: A debt-ridden sharecropper who lost most of his paddy crop to last week’s hailstorm died early this morning, two days after he swallowed pesticide apparently unable to bear the insulting comments of a moneylender. The 38-year-old’s suicide was the 13th by a farmer in Bengal since November. Family members said Bakreswar had been depressed since Tuesday after his crop over two acres in Bhalusi was destroyed in the storm. “He had not been eating anything or talking to anyone since Tuesday. On Friday morning, a moneylender came and demanded that my brother repay Rs 30,000. When my brother sought more time, he insulted him. This could have driven him to commit suicide,” Bakreswar’s elder brother Sahadeb said. Last month, too, a debt-burdened farmer in Barwan, Murshidabad, had committed suicide after a moneylender “insulted” him. Sahadeb said his brother had bought fertilisers and seeds on credit and also taken a loan. The total money he owed came to around Rs 30,000. He said his brother could have harvested 51 quintals of paddy had the hailstorm not destroyed his crop. “He would have had to give 14 quintals to the landowner and could have sold the rest. If he got the minimum support price of Rs 1,080, he would have earned nearly Rs 40,000, enough to pay off his debt,” Sahadeb said. On Friday, hours after the moneylender had left, Bakreswar’s wife Aparna came running to Sahadeb’s house, some 200 yards away, sobbing that her husband had swallowed pesticide. “Aparna told me that after the moneylender had left, Bakreswar sat in a room brooding for a long time. He neither bathed, nor had lunch. After some time, he walked up to his wife and told her he had taken pesticide,” Sahadeb said. The father of two was taken to Katwa sub-divisional hospital from where he was referred to Burdwan Medical College and Hospital. The block development officer of Katwa block-I visited the farmer’s house today and spoke to his family members. “We have received reports of hailstorms and crop damage. We are trying to ascertain the exact cause of the suicide,” acting sub-divisional officer Prasenjit Das said. The chief of the Congress-run Gidhgram panchayat said farmers had been badly hit by the hailstorm. “In the Gidhgram panchayat area, crops have been affected in over 1,000 acres. In Bhalusi alone, crops on nearly 150 acres were affected,” Karunamoy Bhattacharya said. (Telegraph 16/4/12)

Farm labourers migrating in search of work (20)
YADGIR, April 17, 2012: Despite 40 per cent of the agriculture land in Yadgir district being irrigated by the
Upper Krishna Project and numerous minor irrigation tanks, the district is experiencing one of the worst-ever droughts this year and severe drinking water shortage. This tiny district with three taluks provides a picture of contrast of rich and contended agriculturists — whose lands do not face the rigours of the drought owing to assured water from the Narayanpur Left Bank Canal and Shahapur Branch Canal of the Upper Krishna Project (UKP) — on the one hand, and poverty stricken areas with more than 60 per cent land entirely dependent on rain on the other. The failure of rain last year had left most of the water bodies dry and majority of the borewells and open wells in the district, particularly in the rainfed areas, have either gone dry or the yield had come down drastically due to fall the ground water-level. The drinking water shortage even in the irrigation rich villages is more telling this time. Added to this is the frequent and unscheduled power cuts in rural areas, which has hit the drinking water supply schemes badly.

"Seldom the water is supplied in the taps... I have to walk up to 2 km everyday to get one pot of drinking water from a private borewell in an agriculture field," said 10-year-old Lakshmi Savur, who helps her mother in the household work in Gundapur in Yadgir taluk. Gundapur, like many other villages which is dependent on the groundwater, is facing a peculiar problem with almost all borewells going dry. The village had a record 340 borewells, with practically every farmer having one in his agriculture field, to provide irrigation to around 800 acres of land. Of the 340 borewells, 260 have gone dry and the yield has come down sharply in the remaining ones. Basavaraj, a small farmer owning around 3 acres of land, said that his borewell had gone dry a month back and standing vegetable crop of cucumber and cabbage was lost. Although many villages are facing severe shortage of drinking water, the officials have taken up transportation of water only in Alahal village in Yaktapur Gram Panchayat in Surpur taluk. The district administration and the zilla panchayat admit that nearly 250 villages are facing severe drinking water shortage and the figure may go up as the severity of summer increases. The district is also facing severe shortage of fodder, particularly in the rainfed areas and so far no goshalas or fodder banks have been opened. Another feature of Yadgir district is the large-scale migration of agriculture labourers in the lean season to bigger cities such as Bangalore in search of employment. The State government had failed to arrest the migration of agricultural labourers who work as construction workers in Bangalore and other cities. This year the migration had been reported on a large scale in the drought-hit areas since most of the people did not get employment in the agriculture fields and the government failed to provide them work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Drought-stricken cattle becoming fodder for Chamarajanagar tribal farmers

Chamarajanagar: As water resources are fast drying up in this border district, cattle are dying due to lack of fodder and water. About 140 country cows have perished in the last fortnight itself. “We used to find some fodder even the severest summer in the fringe areas of the forests. But this time, even those areas have dried up,” said Rangappa Naika, a farmer who lost three cows in the last 10 days in Hannur hobli of Yelandur taluk. As cattle die, people have started eating their meat. “Most of the carcasses are being consumed by people who rear them,” he said. The consumers are mostly tribal farmers. “In many hoblis, cattle are reared by tribal farmers. They are allowed to roam around the fallow land and devour whatever comes the way. But when they don’t get anything and die of starvation, their meat is consumed by tribes. The district has reported 12 cattle deaths due to starvation,” said KR Sundar, deputy commissioner of Chamarajanagar district. Meantime, farmers from three drought-hit taluks - Gundlupet, Kollegal and Yelandur - have started moving to cities like Mysore, Bangalore and Mangalore in search of water, food and work. Major water sources of water in these taluks are borewells, dug wells, small grade water bodies, rivulets and seasonal water bodies. “But this time, due to drought, most of them have dried up. Water levels in borewells have sunk below 500 feet while water bodies have shrunk into puddles,” Naika said. People of the district are angry with their leaders who are living comfortably elsewhere. They say these leaders did not bother to visit the drought-hit areas. Many of the MLAs of Chamarajanagar district live in posh localities of Mysore. The MP of Chamarajanagar (there is only one MP for the district) R Dhurvanarayana lives in Gokulum Extension of Mysore. MLA from Gundlupet HS Mahadev Prasad lives in Kuvempunagar in Mysore. (DNA 18/4/12)

Farmers planning protest injured in ‘lathi-charge’ (20)

MYSORE, April 23, 2012: At least three farmers sustained injuries when the police allegedly resorted to a lathi-charge at Madapura in H.D. Kote taluk on Sunday. The police were trying to disperse a group of farmers, who planned to stage a protest before Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda in Mysore on Sunday, carrying the body of a sugarcane farmer who allegedly committed suicide in Sagare village of the
taluk on Saturday. The deceased farmer has been identified as Shekarappa (22). Sugarcane Growers' Association president Kuruburu Shanthakumar, who was accompanying the farmers to Mysore when the police allegedly caned the farmers, told The Hindu that Shekarappa had a debt of Rs. 4 lakh. “He had harvested sugarcane a few days ago paying Rs. 15,000 to labourers, but the sugar factory (Bannari Amman Sugars) did not purchase the produce. This hurt the debt-ridden Shekarappa,” Mr. Shanthakumar alleged. Although Mr. Shekarappa allegedly committed suicide on Saturday, nobody from the Revenue Department turned up to his house to console his family and announce compensation. On Sunday, irate farmers decided to take his body to the Deputy Commissioner's office if the Deputy Commissioner failed to come to the village by 1.30 p.m. On finding out that the Chief Minister was coming to Mysore, they warned that they would stage a protest in front of him carrying the body. Police personnel were rushed to the village as a precautionary measure. Farmers became restive when the Deputy Commissioner did not turn up. Upset by the officials' attitude, they shifted Shekarappa's body to a vehicle to proceed to Mysore but were stopped by the police. The police were then reportedly stopped by women, who were carrying sugarcane. Superintendent of Police R. Dileep rushed to the spot to defuse the situation. Additional Superintendent of Police Ananda reportedly sustained injuries when he tried to stop farmers from carrying the body to Mysore. When contacted, Mr. Dileep, who is camping in H.D. Kote, told The Hindu that the situation was under control. Following a complaint by the Shekarappa's family, a case has been registered against the factory management on the charge of abetting suicide, he said. He, however, denied that farmers were caned by the police. “The police tried to disperse them to control the situation.” To a question, Mr. Dileep said: “We did not allow the body to be taken to Mysore as post-mortem was not conducted. Moreover, it is improper to protest carrying a body. We requested farmers to hand over the body but they refused.” Mr. Shanthakumar said Revanna, who suffered injuries in the lathi-charge, had been admitted to K.R. Hospital in Mysore. Details on the other injured farmers were being collected, he added. He demanded a compensation of Rs. 10 lakh from the management of the sugar factory and a higher compensation from the government for Shekarappa's family besides waiver of the loan. Mr. Shanthakumar said: “The management of the sugar factory has agreed to pay compensation to the farmer's family in the presence of the assistant commissioner and the tahsildar on Monday.” The association has decided to write to the Chief Minister to seek more compensation.”We condemn the police action against farmers,” he said. (The Hindu 23/4/12)

Sugarcane farmer in B'lore kills himself after failing to sell crop (20)
Mysore | Agency: DNA: A sugarcane grower Chenne Gowda, 28, of Sagare village committed suicide after a firm that wanted to purchase his produce failed to turn up. Gowda's body was found hanging from a tree in his field. Gowda had harvested sugarcane on April 18. Bannari Amman Sugar Factory that was supposed to send a truck to collect the harvested sugarcane did not come for three days. Gowda had told his brother Revanna that if the truck does not reach on time, the sugarcane may dry up and may not fetch the right price. Since the company failed to show up for three days, Gowda committed suicide, Revanna stated in his complaint. Following the suicide, the police and deputy commissioner visited the spot. However, some relatives assaulted Additional Superintendent of Police (Mysore district) R Anand. Anand has been admitted to Apollo Hospital in Mysore. (DNA 23/4/12)

Swaminathan urges scientists to target 150 mt rice in 2020 (20)
CUTTACK, April 24, 2012: Eminent agricultural scientist and Rajya Sabha member M. S. Swaminathan on Monday urged the scientists of Central Rice Research Institute (CRRI) to emphasise upon “participatory research” and “anticipatory research” for fulfilling the obligations of Food Security Bill and to meet the new challenges of agriculture in the country. Swaminathan, the architect of Indian agriculture was speaking at the 66th Foundation Day celebrations of the premier research institute here where he started his career as a scientist in early 50's. Recollecting the early days of research in CRRI, he said the Institute has contributed immensely towards developing productivity consciousness in the field of agriculture. He said the country for the first time in 2012 crossed the 100 million tons of rice production which itself is a remarkable achievement against the backdrop of “ship-to-mouth” concept that was prevalent in early 60's. “From ship-to-mouth to supporting the largest scheme in the world to fight against hunger through food security Bill, India has made a historic achievement”, he said adding that the rice scientists should now aim for 150 million tons production of rice in the year 2020. The visionary scientist also stressed on new fields of research appreciating the efforts made by Kerala scientists who are now working on below sea level farming. Stressing on increasing the productivity, Swaminathan also
emphasised upon improving the value addition of rice production and said the research on producing medicinal rice apart from hybrid rice is the call of the day. In view of UN declaration of the year 2014 as International Year of Family Farmers, the 87-year-old scientist called upon the scientists to make the farming more popular among women and younger generation of society. “CRRI has to think about improving the status of each family member of a farmer”, he said. Among others, the deputy director general of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) S.K. Dutta and Director of CRRI Trilochan Pradhan addressed on the occasion which was attended among others by farmers and farm scientists across the State. Pradhan in his address informed that CRRI has till date developed 85 new varieties of rice for different ecosystems of the country, including three hybrid varieties which are capable of producing 8 metric tons of rice per hectare. He said the scientists have in the meantime identified several other varieties which are in the pipeline for release soon. (The Hindu 24/4/12)

Five more farmers commit suicides in Vidarbha (20)
Mumbai, May 2, 2012: At least five “debt trapped” farmers have committed suicide in the last 48 hours in Maharashtra’s agrarian crisis hit Vidarbha region, taking the toll to 332 in the state in 2012, an activist said here Tuesday. “Ramdas Dhale of village Chincholi in Yavatmal district committed suicide early Tuesday. He was a cotton farmer who was in debt trap of around Rs.3 lakh,” said Kishor Tiwari, president of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a farmer advocacy group. “In the last 48 hours, four other farmers also committed suicide after they could not repay their debt. Their names are Ajabrao Meshram of Shivani and Ramlina Pedkulwar of Aril in Yavatmal, Parvatibai Kadel of Pohardevi in Washim, and Shriram Kakad of Sategaon in Amaravati,” he added. Tiwari said the total number of suicides by farmers has reached 332 in the four months of 2012. He lamented that in spite of visits by several committees and political leaders, including Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi, not much is being done to help farmers or prevent their suicides. (The Hindu 2/5/12)

BJP attacks UPA over farmer suicides in Maharashtra (20)
Raising the issue during Zero Hour, BJP leader Prakash Javadekar said five farmers in Vidarbha committed suicide on International Labour Day on May 1, while 900 farmers have committed suicide in six districts of the state in the last eight years of the United Progressive Alliance. “More than 370 farmers have committed suicide since January. These are not suicides but killings and the name of the killer is UPA...Rahul Gandhi had promised help to Kalavati, whose farmer husband had committed suicide, but she has to wage a battle to get her dues. Two more people from her family also committed suicide later,” Javadekar said. Backing Javadekar on the issue, Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said, “Rahul Gandhi went to Maharashtra four days ago. It was political tourism. People did not get anything from this political tourism except some assurances.” Raut also pointed to the suicide of three farmers including Gajanand Ghotekar, a cotton farmer in Yavatmal region in April. “Gajanand, in his suicide note, urged people not to vote for Congress and NCP saying these parties do not care to farmers. A person does not tell a lie at the time of his death. Hence the government and Parliament should take his words seriously,” Raut said. Demanding urgent steps in view of the drought in the region, he said the pace of steps being taken by the government and the administration in the state was very slow. “Even 25 per cent of the announcements made by the government have not actually reached the farmers,” he said. Javadekar said that instead of making efforts to end the woe of farmers, ministers in Maharashtra are arguing that figures of suicide are exaggerated. He said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh [ Images ] had announced a package of over Rs 3,000 crore to Vidarbha but the government and the 'babus' devoured the entire money. He said that while cotton farmers are prospering in the in BJP-ruled Gujarat, the same farmers in Maharashtra are committing suicide. Javadekar said the government should immediately help these farmers through a comprehensive package and an action plan. © Copyright 2012 PTI. All rights reserved. Republication or redistribution of PTI content, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent. (Rediff News 2/5/12)

Urban people may not know the real problems of farmers (20)
It is an accepted fact that importing food cannot solve the problem of food shortage. “Modern technologies do offer vast prospects for crop improvement, but that alone need not make it popular among small and marginal farmers,” says farmer Mr. Mahavir Singh Arya, from Churu district, Rajasthan. Despite facing acute problem of water shortage, Mr. Mahavir, an advocate of organic farming, developed numerous varieties of wheat and mustard, and claims that he never used any inorganic fertilizer to grow crops and still managed to generate good yield. “Urban people do not seem to know the real problem we
How many farmers need to die? (20)

Five cotton farmer suicides on the eve of the 52nd Maharashtra Day have cruelly brought back into sharp focus the only thing ‘Maha’ about the state — the plight of its hapless farmers caught in the worst agrarian crisis, a drought that makes 1972 seem like a fairy tale and a government that simply doesn’t care. Wonder how the chief minister and his cabinet celebrated the fact that this takes the grand total of farmers ending their lives so far in 2012 to 332! Especially since Maharashtra agriculture minister, Balasaheb Vikhe-Patil, has himself admitted, cotton cultivation jumped to more than 44 lakh hectares in the dry regions of Vidarbha, Marathwada, Khandesh and North Maharashtra though yield has fallen to 45 lakh bales from 86 lakh bales last year. Long past their threshold of taking on any more losses, farmers have used surface water available for irrigation to save their cotton crop, even at the risk of exhausting their drinking water resources. A senior bureaucrat in the agriculture ministry cockily wondered whether the media would blame the government for climate change and the drought too. I told him perhaps the drought cannot be blamed on any one in particular, but magnifying its horror for farmers who are anyway on the brink is nothing but cruel. Western Maharash tra, with its huge concentration of sugar, milk and drought cannot be blamed on any one in particular, but magnifying its horror for farmers who are anywa y and not of one district. Every year, the heavy rain fall in the hills of Wai, Panchagani and Mahabaleshwar ensures that the Koyna dam overflows. When the gates are opened, it leaves low-lying plains like Sangli, Karad and Kolhapur flooded. While it can be nobody’s case that people love to be rescued by the army and resettled in schools temporarily, so resigned are the locals (particularly in villages like Bilavdi and

The former may be pressed by his need to tend to hi s constituency but isn’t he the CM of the whole sta te of resources. So no prizes for guessing that everyo ne from CM Prithviraj Chavan, Union agriculture education barons and its stranglehold on the state politics, has always ensured that it gets the lion’ s share the media would blame the government for climate ch ange and the drought too. I told him perhaps the minister Shard Pawar, prince-in-waiting Rahul Gandhi and even leader of the opposition in the legislative council, Vinod Tawade, chose to dash there to ‘look at the ground situation’ at the first sign of drought. The former may be pressed by his need to tend to his constituency but isn’t he the CM of the whole state and not of one district. Every year, the heavy rainfall in the hills of Wai, Panchagani and Mahabaleshwar ensures that the Koyna dam overflows. When the gates are opened, it leaves low-lying plains like Sangli, Karad and Kolhapur flooded. While it can be nobody’s case that people love to be rescued by the army and resettled in schools temporarily, so resigned are the locals (particularly in villages like Bilavdi and
Valva, which go completely under water) to this annual disaster that they shift food grains and other perishables to safer places long before the administration puts out an alert. Yet just two hours away on the borders of Karnataka in places like Jath and Kawte-Mahakal even in the thick of monsoon, locals have to depend on tankers for water. If leaders cannot be bothered with areas within their own districts, is there any hope in hell they will bother about far off Vidharbha or Marathwada? Wonder exactly how many farmers need to die before the government gets its act together? (DNA 4/5/12)

**Drop in cases of suicide by farmers: Government** (20)
NEW DELHI: The number of suicide by farmers has gone down in the country, the government stated in the Lok Sabha. Minister of state for finance Namo Narain Meena informed the Lok Sabha during Question Hour that due to several measures taken by the government the cases had fallen. "As far as farmer suicides are concerned, there has been a fall in the numbers in Andhra Pradesh, also in Karnataka and Maharashtra. In Uttar Pradesh it was nil last year," Meena said. (Times of India 4/5/12)

**Bt cotton proves ‘deadly’ for farmers** (20)
ADILABAD, May 5, 2012: In a scenario dominated by Bt cotton, only those farmers in Adilabad seem to be safe and happy who have practically given up cotton cultivation. Many farmers, especially those with smaller holdings, are finding the economics of Bt cotton to be really deadly. Some 23 suicides by cotton farmers have been reported in the district since November last year. In a majority of these instances, the farmers were caught in debt traps. Take the case of farmer Umak Namdev of Mangrud in Bela mandal whose cumulative debts incurred during the last few years mounted to over Rs. 3 lakh. The money was spent as investment in the 11 acres of his field, seven of which were taken on lease, and towards family maintenance. “Having found the four acres of land insufficient to provide for the entire family, we started tilling leased out lands since the last three years. The only way to offset the loss incurred in successive years was to cultivate more of the leased land,” revealed Vinod, younger son of Namdev of the circumstances that saw the cotton farmer ending up being caught in the vicious circle. “In order to clear the bank crop loan of Rs. 70,000, my father had recently taken a private loan for the same amount at 10 per cent per month rate of interest. Though there is still some time to go before the banks start issuing crop loans, the pressure of debts was unbearable for him,” said elder son Devendra as he provided an insight into the economics fostered by Bt cotton. “Bt cotton will leave the farmer in a shambles even if one indicator in the gamut fails. The farmer needs weather conditions and market to be in his favour in order to end the season in some profit,” opined Thakre Mangesh, president of local youth association. Like many of his ilk, Namdev found himself being forced to take up sowing thrice during kharif last year. His helplessness was compounded by costly inputs, failed yield and plummeting cotton price. “The ones who lease out the land are a happy lot earning between Rs.10,000 and Rs.15,000 per acre. The income of a ‘successful’ tenant farmer will be far less,” Mangesh says. (The Hindu 5/5/12)

**blames government for farmers’ suicides** (20)
Tumkur, May 7, 2012: K. Dorairaju, writer, has blamed the “unscientific policies” of successive governments for the increasing number of farmers’ suicides in the country. Participating in the Buddha Jayanti celebrations at Kibbanahalli cross in Tiptur taluk on Sunday, he said those in power were yet to take any action on the exploitation of Dalits and unorganised sector employees. Kodihalli Chandrashekar, State president, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sanga, said the government was not giving minimum support price for copra because of which farmers had been suffering. He said he would soon hold talks with Chief Minister D.V. Sadananda Gowda on the issue. B.C. Nagesh, MLA; Kunduru Thimmaiah, district president, Dalit Sangharsh Samiti; K.B.Siddaiah, writer; and Anand Ravi, president, Tumkur Zilla Panchayat, were present. (The Hindu 7/5/12)

**Faulty policies, unremunerative prices blamed for plight of farmers** (20)
KURNOOL, May 8, 2012: A delegation of farmers’ representatives visited the agriculture market yard here on Monday to study price situation and interacted with the farmers who brought their produce to the market. The leaders included Kolli Nageswara Rao, P. Padma, Ramakrishna, Jagannatham, Ramesh Kumar and others. Talking to reporters, Mr. Kolli Nageswara Rao said farmers were in deep distress on account of unremunerative prices for almost all commodities. He said chilli which fetched Rs. 10,000 per quintal last year fell to Rs. 1,500. Farmers told the leaders that there were no buyers for chilli. He criticised the faulty policies of the successive governments that brought the situation to the brink of
suicides. He said remunerative prices declared by the government itself were low, not to forget the prices quoted by traders. He pointed out that the Swaminathan Commission advised the government to fix the prices after adding 50 per cent of the cultivation costs as profit. At least the government should add 16 per cent as profit over the cost as was being done in the case of industrialists. Mr. Nageswara Rao said farmers lost crops in 82 lakh acres on account of drought last season. The government estimated a requirement of Rs. 1,800 crore as compensation but nothing was done so far. Apart from this, the government announced an interest free loan of Rs. 1 lakh and waiver of interest on kharif loans. He said the delegation was touring the districts between May 2 and 10 and the visits would culminate into a dharna at Hyderabad on May 10. Mr. Jagannatham said onion was quoted at Rs. 300 per quintal, castor Rs. 2,800 and ajwain (carom seed) Rs. 3,000. He said the yield of ajwain was only 80 kg per acre this year. (The Hindu 8/5/12)

Farmer suicide: Sons say they will leave school to repay debts (20)
Mahabubnagar: Ramu and Shekhar, brothers and teenagers, live in a tiny village in Andhra Pradesh's Mahabubnagar district. Their home is a tiny, concrete one-room structure with virtually nothing to distinguish it from others near it. But Ramu and Shekhar are not uncomfortable when we ask to film them. In January, NDTV reported on their family. Their father, a farmer, hung himself because he could not repay what he had borrowed from local moneylenders. Their mother, Bangaru Lakshmamma, said she didn't want them to drop out of school, but it was hard to turn down the offer of letting someone buy them as bonded labour. NDTV viewers and ndtv.com users donated generously, sending cheques that added up to 1.2 lakhs. The government did nothing. It had promised after NDTV's report to re-examine the conclusion that their father killed himself after a fight with his wife, which meant the family could not claim the compensation given in cases of farmer suicides in this drought-prone part of the state. The family still owes more than two lakh rupees. But all they have is their tiny farm and the one-room house. Thanks to the donations they received, Shekhar and Ramu were able to stay in school. But they are now learning the ropes on a construction site. In 40-degrees heat, they carry dozens of bricks and dig away at the ground that seems relentless. "We get Rs. 150 every day," says Ramu. "To start work on our field, we need money to buy seeds and other things." They need the money to plant cotton seeds on their field. Shekhar has accepted that his education may be about to wrap up. "If I pass my exams and study, I can become a doctor or engineer. But I can't dream like that...there is no money and there is work to do," the 14-year-old says. The boys hope to grow cotton this season on their tiny farm. The same crop had repeatedly failed their father but they see no other way out to repay loans. (NDTV 9/5/12)

Crop damage drives farmer to suicide (20)
BURDWAN: The 45-year-old farmer, distressed over crops that were damaged in the recent nor'westers, took pesticide on Monday. Dalim Pal, a resident of Notungram village under Bhatar police station area, was immediately admitted to Burdwan Medical College Hospital (BMCH) where he died on Tuesday. The body has been sent for autopsy. Dilip Pal, a relative of the deceased, told TOI, "Dalim had 17 bighas of cultivable lands. He had taken a loan of Rs 60,000 at a high interest rate from a local mahajan. Besides cultivating vegetables, he used the money to cultivate boro crops on about 10 bighas. But due to a series of squalls in the past few weeks, the crops were badly damaged and this concerned him." Dalim had cultivated aman crop in the last season but failed to sell the harvest. Depressed over the rising burden of debt, the farmer used to have regular quarrels with his wife, said sources. TNNHis only son works at a private company in Durgapur. Hence, Dalim used to look after the entire cultivation himself. SDO (North) of Burdwan, Prasanta Acharya said that he has sought a detailed report of the incident from the BDO of Bhatar. There have been a number of farmer suicides in several villages of Bhatar in the past one year. Incidentally, Bhatar MLA Bonomalii Hazra is the chairman of assembly standing committee on agriculture but that has changed nothing, said sources. (Times of India 9/5/12)

Piling debts drive farmer to suicide in Burdwan (20)
BURDWAN: Unable to withstand the pressure of piling debts, a sharecropper took pesticide at Baranagar village under Pandua police station. Tapan Munda, 42, had allegedly incurred a huge debt in the market and drank pesticide on Thursday. He was rushed to the nearby Memari Block Health Centre where he died in the wee hours on Saturday. The sharecropper had cultivated boro crops on eight bighas. While some of the crops got infected, the others got damaged on the recent squalls. With mounting pressure from the local mahajans, Tapan committed suicide, alleged his elder brother Swapani Munda. Tapan was
the sole bread winner of the family and is survived by a wife and three children. The body was sent for autopsy to Burdwan Medical College Hospital and later handed over to his family. Besides cultivating on the eight bighas, Tapan used to work as an agricultural labourer to supplement his income, said family sources. Bulbul Mondal, the block agricultural officer of Pandua, said that she has send officials to probe the death. (Times of India 20/5/12)

**Dowry system fuelling farmers’ suicides in Vidarbha (20)**
Mumbai/Nagpur: The dowry system is driving many farmers of Maharashtra’s Vidarbha region to suicide, a fact which was brought into national focus Sunday on “Satyamev Jayate”, Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan’s popular show. In an interview on the show, Usha Ashtekar, 25, spoke about how her father borrowed from a money-lender but had to repay the loan even before he could get Usha married. “My father took a loan from a money-lender to get me married. But before he could do so, the money-lender made my father repay the loan by using force. Worried about my marriage plus the bad condition of our farm, he committed suicide two years back,” Usha told IANS from her village Sakra in Pandharkawada tehsil of Maharashtra’s Yavatmal district. "Later, my brother and mother took another loan and spent over Rs.3 lakh on my wedding, bowing down to the needs of my in-laws. But it was all in vain as their demands kept increasing. I had to return to my mother's home in only three months as I could no longer bear their torture," she added. Usha, who has been married for over a year, is still staying at her mother's home and prays that her husband will call her back some day. "Usha is one of the many cases that have met a similar fate. According to a survey done by the Maharashtra government in 2006, out of 20 lakh households in Vidarbha, around 4 lakh households had daughters of marriageable age," said Kishor Tiwari, President of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a farmers advocacy group. "But most of these girls did not get married due to lack of resources. The survey also said that the entire credit chain of these farmers was disturbed as they had to use the loan money in their daughters' marriage instead of using them for betterment of their farms," Tiwari said. Tiwari pointed out that there has been no such survey in the last six years and that VJAS is planning to demand for a similar survey. "It is inhuman to ask for dowry, as those seeking dowry are themselves aware of the grave crisis in Vidarbha," Tiwari said. (Zee News 21/5/12)

**Three more farmers committed suicide**
Amravati: Three more farmers have committed suicide since Sunday, one of them on Tuesday afternoon, taking this year's toll to 334 in western Vidarbha only, a non-government organisation fighting for farmers' rights said. Debt-trapped cotton farmer Tulsiram Gandhi, 65, committed suicide by hanging himself in his house at village Sawala in Amravati district, Kishor Tiwari, president of the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti, said. "It is ironical that a progressive farmer like Gandhi committed suicide in the village that was in 2006 visited by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who assured them of appropriate relief measures," Tiwari said. Gandhi’s recent crop loss put him in debt of over Rs.3 lakh. The owner of 25 acres of land, he was facing crop failure since 2009, Tiwari said. Two other farmers - Nandu Rathode of Kana village in Yavatmal district and Prakash Gore of Dhamangoan (Bade) in Buldhana district - also committed suicide on Sunday, taking the toll in 2012 to 334 in western Vidarbha, Tiwari claimed. In view of the water-scarcity situation in western Maharashtra, the central government released Rs.700 crore relief earlier this month. However, farmers have cried foul over the package, saying several districts have been left out of the relief scheme. The toll of 334 does not include five districts of eastern Vidarbha, namely Nagpur, Bhandara, Gondia, Gadchiroli and Chandrapur. The figures of farmer suicides were not available from the respective district collecterates and commissionerates despite repeated attempts. "We have also been making efforts to get an official figure of farmer suicides from authorities, but have failed. However, we have been able to document 112 farmer suicides in the year 2012 in these five districts," Tiwari said. (DNA 22/5/12)

**Minister: report awaited on farmer's suicide (20)**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, May 23, 2012: Agriculture Minister K.P. Mohanan said here on Tuesday that the State government was not sure if the farmer Sathyadas of Edathua in Alappuzha district had committed suicide on Sunday because of agrarian distress. The Minister told presspersons that a report from the authorities on the suicide was awaited. The farmer, he said, had been paid for the paddy procured from him by the government. Action had been taken to release the payments to the farmers who had not yet received them. He said the government was procuring paddy at Rs.15 a kg from all districts
through Supplyco. It was the biggest ever procurement drive in the State. Mr. Mohanan said the government had already named the new Chairman of the State Farmers' Distress Relief Commission. The choice of two members of the commission would be decided soon. He said the "Niravu" scheme, which targeted agriculture development from supply of seeds to marketing, had been launched in 12 Assembly constituencies. It would be extended to all constituencies in phases. Listing the achievements of his department over the past year, the Minister said that vegetable cultivation had been started commercially on 2,000 hectares of farmlands. The department had readied six wholesale markets, and about 250 tonnes of fruits and vegetables were being auctioned through them every month. He said the payment of various assistances to the farmers had been routed through the banks. Pension at Rs. 400 a month was being paid to farmers owning less than two hectares. A programme had been launched for promotion of organic farming. An insurance programme had been launched to cover all the cattle in the State at low rates of premium (2.4 per cent). Assistance had been provided for mechanisation of 400 cattle farms. A high-tech layer breeder farm had been started in Kollam and a modern chicken feed factory at Mala. He noted that the Stationery Department under him had been able to supply paper and other items needed for school textbooks in time so that they could be printed before the beginning of the academic year. (The Hindu 23/5/12)

Poverty-stricken farmer, family commit suicide (20)

BHOPAL: Driven by abject poverty and financial distress, a farmer along with his wife and two children committed suicide by jumping before a train in Harda district in western Madhya Pradesh, police said on Friday. Rajendra Singh Rajput, 40, along with his wife aged 35, and two boys Aniketh, 14, and Mohit, 11, was run over by Guwahati Express (Mumbai LTT - Guwahati) in Palasnar area on Thursday night, they said. Rajendra, hailing from Kalanpur village, along with wife and kids came down walking to a temple in Harda and after offering prayer took the extreme step, Harda district superintendent of police RS Uike told TOI. He said initially it appears Rajendra was in financial distress failing to make both ends meet. "He was a deeply religious person. I have sent the sub divisional officer of police (SDOP) to Kalanpur to carry out detailed investigation regarding the exact cause which prompted Rajendra to take the extreme step," Uike said. Rajendra had 14 acres agriculture land which he had sold off some four years ago, people close to Rajput family said. After this, he used to take land on lease and cultivate it to make a living, they added. He was under tremendous stress following financial hardship. He frequented temples, especially Sai Baba to draw comfort. Some months ago, he went to Sai Baba temple in Shirdi as well, they added. (Times of India 2/6/12)

Guar: Common man's food turns into green gold (20)

NEW DELHI: It used to be a dry and arid land legume grown by poor farmers on marginal lands in Rajasthan, Haryana, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. Till a few years back, it sold for as low as Rs 1,000 a quintal. Eaten either at home by farmers (some may remember it as guar ki phalli) or sold off for export to be used as a binding and thickening agent in edible products like ice creams, it sells now for anything between Rs 10,000- Rs 30,000 a quintal. The reason: it has become an essential lubricant for the multibillion shale oil and gas drilling where its used for the 'fracking' process. The result is a frenzy that is connecting traders from Houston to Jodhpur and turning the obscure plant grown mostly on wastelands into a much sought after commodity. The rising prices and short supply is making farmers and business groups push for more acreage. India produces 80% of the global guar crop with Pakistan and the US following a distant second and third though all are trying to increase acreage of the bean. Because it is a rainfed crop with relatively little organized market, upscaling production has not been a smooth process. The demand for gum extracted from the guar seed or cluster bean as it is known in English has shot up so high on the commodities market that the regulator, Forward Markets Commission, has had to step in once to halt futures trade in illegal transactions. Nothing has stopped the bull run though. The boom, however, could be temporary as the shale oil and gas industry in the US, which is already worth $30 billion, is furiously looking for alternatives as prices of guar skyrocket. In the meanwhile, there is a gold rush to make the most of the demand. Industry insiders suggest that for every rupee a trader invests at the local level - say at centres like Jodhpur or better still in the villages where marginal farmers are growing it - he could earn more than Rs 100. There are established exporters who have been supplying guar for the food industry for years and then there are the guar cowboys running to the arid zone even in soaring temperatures to get a share of the pie. The controversial shale oil drilling in the US (the green brigade is set against it) is seen as the future of the fossil fuel driven world and the marginal small farmers
in distant Jhunjhunu and Jodhpur in Rajasthan have become a part of that lucrative future. (Times of India 2/6/12)

**Scientist's warning on farmer suicides (20)**

GUWAHATI: Agriculture scientist GV Ramanjaneyulu on Saturday said Assam could go the Chhattisgarh way in terms of farmers' suicides if the state government fails to implement concrete measures in protecting the interests of farmers. The scientist was speaking at an interactive session titled "The Current Crisis in Indian Agriculture and the Way Forward" held in Cotton College State University, organized by its department of economics. He emphasized on the comparisons between Assam and Chhattisgarh in terms of production of different varieties of rice and engagement of tribals in farming and agriculture.

"What happened in Chhattisgarh was quite unfortunate because the state government had decided to introduce hybrid rice which almost made the traditional varieties extinct. Besides, there were many flawed measures introduced by the government which proved disastrous. Farmers have become an endangered species," said Ramanjaneyulu, executive director Centre for Advanced Sustentative Agriculture, Hyderabad. "That state has witnessed a large number of farmers committing suicide. But Assam has the lowest record of farmers' suicide. However the situation could go wrong if the state government decides to introduce hybrid variety and Assam could suffer the same fate as Chhattisgarh. The government must put a check on farming by migrants as they tend to use fertilizers because they don't have any bond towards the land," added the scientist. The scientist also took a dig at chief minister Tarun Gogoi's recent announcement to allocate Rs 33 crore for organic farming by stating that until and unless there are some concrete policies regarding how and where to promote such farming, the entire money could go waste. On the issue of green revolution being shifted to the eastern region of the country, Ramanjaneyulu said, "It needs to be properly addressed. If there are pesticides involved in agricultural fields in the upstream, then there are possibilities of them being disposed in the downstream. Assam has a rich history of producing different varieties of rice. But it has lost most varieties now." (Times of India 3/6/12)

**Sugarcane farmer commits suicide (20)**

CUDDALORE, June 7, 2012: In a suspected case of suicide, a sugarcane farmer and resident of Mapadugai in Mayiladuthurai was found dead on the premises of a private hospital at Chidambaram on Wednesday. During the investigation, the police found copies of letters reportedly written by the deceased Murugaiyyan (60) to the Chief Minister, the Nagapattinam District Collector, and the Cane Officer of the K.R.Ramasamy Cooperative Sugarmills in his pocket. Murugaiyyan, police said, had explained in his letters that as he was facing serious financial crisis, he had taken the decision to consume poison and end his life. The police further said that the letter also stated that when he took sugarcane worth Rs.5 lakh to the sugarmill, his produce was turned down on account of the employees being on strike. Since he raised the crop on obtaining loan, he was pushed into a deep economic crisis from which he could not recover, police said. He had also expressed his wish to donate the body to a hospital. The police sent the body to the Chidambaram government hospital for post-mortem. (The Hindu 7/6/12)

**Farmers’ suicide a media hype’ (20)**

Central Bank of India on Wednesday said misuse of farm loans was the prime reason of increasing NPAs (non-performing assets). The bank also brushed aside Madhya Pradesh government’s claim that farming is a non-profitable business in India. The bank also said rising number of farmers committing suicide was just media hype. “Every business is profitable and agriculture is no exception. Farmers just misuse bank loans and skip repayment. If farming is a loss making business why do they continue with it? Why they go for alternate channels of loans?” MV Tanksale, chairman of the bank asked here on Wednesday after a meeting. The National Crime Records Bureau’s (NCRB) latest report on ‘Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India’ places the number for 2010 at 15,964. Nearly two-thirds of all farm suicides have occurred in five States: Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the NCRB report says. He said his bank would re-strategies its farm loan recovery process so that more farmers can make repayments. “Farmers suicide numbers is just media hype,” he said. The state government has included its seven-pronged development strategy to make farming a profitable business. Also the state Human Rights Commission had taken suo-motto cognizance of rising number of farmers’ suicide cases in the state and recommended that farming should be made profitable with collective efforts of bankers and state authorities. The bank has plans to open ultra small branches in non-bankable areas and brick and
The public sector bank performed dismally for the quarter ended March 31, 2012 and posted a net loss of Rs 105.23 crore. The bank's net profit for the corresponding January-March period in FY 2011 stood at Rs 132.7 crore. It has plans to open more branches and ATMs and also pump in money in restructuring. “I have plans to open 200 branches and 1000 ATMs this year,” Tanksale added. (Business Standard 7/6/12)

Rs 3,250-cr special irrigation scheme for Vidarbha (20)
Nagpur: The Centre has sanctioned a special irrigation scheme worth Rs 3,250 crore aimed to meet a new micro-irrigation target of 1,43,500 hectares in the Vidarbha region still coping with reports of farmer suicides. The Centre had, under the 2006 Prime Minister’s package, given about Rs 4,211 crore for irrigation projects in Vidarbha that the government claims has created an additional potential of 1,22,896 hectares. Called Vidarbha Intensive Irrigation Development Project (VIIDP), the new scheme is to be spread over four years (2012-13 to 2016-17) and will create the target irrigation potential by implementing various measures ranging from building new minor and micro-irrigation projects to in situ water conservation and providing the farmers with subsidised irrigation implements. The scheme’s main objectives are to increase cotton productivity, bring maximum area under irrigation, increase water-retention capacity of soil by in situ soil and water conservation, renovation and strengthening of existing minor irrigation projects, providing farmers with water-drawing implements and increase use of drip irrigation for economic and effective utilisation of irrigation water. In the current year, Rs 300 crore will be spent on various components. Divisional Joint Director of Agriculture, Amravati Division, Suresh Ambulgikar says: ‘The scheme will be implemented jointly by Minor Irrigation sector of the zilla parishad and the agriculture department. In our division, which is mainly cotton and soyabean-growing area, we will be selecting the existing watershed areas for soil and water conservation in farmers’ lands. The basic unit for the project won’t be the village, but the watershed areas that might include areas of one or more villages.’ (Indian Express 8/6/12)

‘Market forces should guide land acquisition, not govt’ (20)
The farmers’ anger over land acquisition is legitimate. As Oliver Goldsmith says in his poem ‘The Deserted Village’: “Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey, Where wealth accumulates and men decay…” The first-ever attempt to have a Land Acquisition Act by a government in India was in 1824 in Bengal, when it was enforced for ‘public purpose’ – laying railway tracks and building Secretariat and Defence establishments. The law was amended thrice, made all encompassing in 1870 and expanded in 1894. This Act is still prevalent, of course with 21 amendments. In 2004, the UPA government brought in the concept of Special Economic Zone and Section 17 of this Act empowered the government to ‘take over any land without consent of the farmer or landlord for public purpose’. Many state governments, including those of Mayawati and Mulayam Singh Yadav, misused this provision. These governments sold off huge tracts of land acquired in Noida and Lucknow to private real estate agents seven years after acquisition. Fortunately, the Supreme Court struck down the deal stating it was ‘illegal acquisition of land’. Karnataka’s story is no different as the government indulged in denotification in a hush-hush manner without bothering to define the ‘public purpose’ for which the land was being acquired. Our farmers should not behave like Luddites – a group of early 19th century English workmen who destroyed labour-saving machinery as a protest. Instead, they should concentrate on policy inputs. One must understand from Mamata Banerjee’s case in Singur or KIADB scam in Karnataka that land should be made available to industries through open market and not through the government. The issues the farmers’ lobby should perhaps try to focus on are: * Is the land earmarked for acquisition arable or infertile? * Does the acquired land include pastures, forest, wasteland, dumping ground, river beds and river banks, char land, or one which the poor depend on for fuel fodder or food? * Does the landowner have right to refuse or will he get back the land if it is not used for ‘public purpose’? * Will the compensation really compensate for the loss of land – both permanent and annual? * Check if the Rehabilitation and Resettlement package is being implemented. The planning corridors in India do not echo the voice of Gandhi, Tagore, Vinoba Bhave or Pannalal Dasgupta. Industrialisation, globalisation and modernisation is the buzzword. The government of the day finds the Parliamentary Standing Committee’s recommendations on land acquisition “retrogressive”. Union ministers Anand Sharma and Jairam Ramesh both disagreed with the recommendations of the Committee, though the Land Acquisition Bill only stated that “no land should be acquired by the government for industries”. On the other hand, farmers’ suicides are highlighted to stall land acquisition, which hampers development. Even though farmers’ suicides have not exceeded the
number of housewives and self-employed persons committing suicide in this country, they make headlines. Gheraos, rasta rokos or mobbing of events or interrupting conferences will do no good to farmers. The public policy pursued by the State government should be brought under scrutiny by experts and thinkers. (Asian Age 10/6/12)

**Govt targets 6% annual growth in agriculture (20)**
PANAJI: The agriculture sector, which was allegedly neglected over the last couple of years, may see a ray of hope as the government has decided to increase the agricultural output by around 6% to 7% every year. Chief minister Manohar Parrikar has decided to keep the agriculture portfolio to ensure agriculture growth which has witnessed a decline over the years. Parrikar said, "I have decided to keep the agriculture portfolio because I want to ensure that agriculture production in Goa increases by 6% to 7% every year". Goa is covered with 3.70 lakh hectares of land out of which 1.40 lakh hectares is used for agriculture. Over the last couple of years, Goa has witnessed less than 2% agriculture growth and to increase this, the government has made a budgetary provision of 137 crore, which is a 40% increase as compared to last year's budgetary provision to boost agriculture in the state. "I have started taking personal interest to boost agriculture in the state and in that direction, we have already started taking action," Parrikar said. According to the recently published economic survey, the negative growth of -10.38% in the agriculture sector in 2008-09, increased to 5.37% in 2009-10. However in 2010-11, the growth rate dropped down to 1.54%, the survey states. In Goa, around 50,000 families depend on agriculture with a total population of around 2.5 lakh people. Paddy crop, cashew production, coconuts, arecanut, sugarcane and various types of vegetables are some of the major agriculture crops of the state. Around 1.2 lakh raw paddy and 25,000 tonnes of cashewnuts were produced in the state last year. Agriculture director Satish Tendulkar said the increase in agriculture area, investment in agriculture sector and production per hectares will help the department to increase the agriculture output in the state. The government has already started providing support for building infrastructure, irrigation project, mechanization and poly houses for agricultural growth. The government also provides subsidy for farmers to purchase seeds, machinery, solar fencing and installing the water pumps. Tendulkar said that the government is focusing on increasing paddy production and to promote groundnut production in the state. "The results of steps taken by the government to increase agriculture growth will be evident in the next two years," Tendulkar said. (Times of India 11/6/12)

**Protest over fertilizer price increase (20)**
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, June 18, 2012: The State units of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) have protested against the sudden increase in the prices of chemical fertilizers in the country. In separate statements issued here on Sunday, CPI State secretary Pannian Ravindran and RSP State secretary A.A. Azeez said the Union government, on the one hand, had slashed fertilizer subsidies and, on the other, had allowed multinational fertilizer companies to decide the prices of their products. The farm sector in the country was already in a severe crisis, due to high costs of fertilizers and low prices of farm produce. Thousands of debt-ridden farmers had committed suicide. The latest increase in fertilizer prices would put the farmers in further misery, they said. The prices of all fertilizers, except urea, had gone up by 30 to 60 per cent, they noted, urging the State government to take immediate steps to ensure the supply of fertilizers at reasonable prices to the farmers in the State. According to a Palakkad report, the price of Complex rose to Rs.1,100 from Rs.800 a bag. Diammonia factoryfose costs Rs.1,200 a bag against Rs.910 a bag last week. The fertilizers are in short-supply and many farmers in Palakkad could not use it for the first crop of paddy. (The Hindu 18/6/12)

**Mother tells rice bowl truth: farm can’t feed (20)**
Burdwan, June 19: Since last November, when her farmer son Safar Molla, 18, consumed pesticide to get rid of mounting debt, the widow has decided not to allow her other son, Babar, to take up farming. Rizia, in her early 50s, cannot read or write. The woman, however, has learnt the fallacy of rice economics in Burdwan — once known as the rice bowl of Bengal — that pushed her son into the vicious cycle of borrowing before sowing and borrowing again after harvesting as his produce failed to fetch a fair price. “It was the second day of Agrahayan (the month of harvesting). Safar returned from the field in the evening…. He was worried about his mounting debts, but he told me not to worry. He then went to his room, switched on the television set and consumed pesticide,” Rizia recounted as her eyes turned moist. Babar, 20, occasionally gets some odd jobs, but his mother would not let him take the plunge into
farming. Ahead of the Aman season — during which around 75 per cent to 80 per cent of over 150 lakh tonnes, Bengal’s annual rice produce — such decisions are not uncommon across 18 of the 31 blocks in Burdwan. “What’s the point in farming if it can’t give us food and some basic comfort?” asked Rizia, a resident of Bhatar, around 40km from Burdwan town. Suchona Pal (top) and Baduli Dhara, whose husbands committed suicide. Pictures by Krishna DasShe had come to the district headquarters today to take part in a programme organised by the Paschimbangla Ganatantrik Mohila Samity, the women’s wing of the CPM, and the Krishak Sabha, the party’s farmer wing. The programme was organised to highlight agrarian distress in the district, which used to be a red citadel till a couple of years ago. The beleaguered party is now trying to highlight the “mismanagement” of the new regime in handling the farm sector to win over its supporters, who have been deserting the party since 2008 panchayat elections. During the meeting, the CPM leaders rolled out a list of names of 41 farmers who have committed suicide over the last one year because of the state government’s failure to procure their produce by paying minimum support price. “The government had offered Rs 1,080 per quintal as the minimum support price but only a small percentage of farmers in this rice bowl managed to get this price and that resulted in acute distress and people took their lives,” said Abdur Rezzak Mandal, the Krishak Sabha secretary in Burdwan. A letter, bearing the names of the deceased farmers and their addresses, was sent to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today with the request for a probe to assess the situation. Till now, the Mamata Banerjee government has maintained that not a single farmer committed suicide because of farming distress. While the exact reason of the deaths may require a detailed probe, there is little doubt that agrarian distress in Bengal has grown in recent years because of rise in costs of inputs such as power, seeds and fertilisers and the drop in price realisation of the produce. .. (Telegraph 20/6/12)

Bt Cotton farmers record zero suicide rate in Karnataka (20)
Bangalore: Bt Cotton farmers have recorded a zero suicide figure in Karnataka. Cotton area as a proportion of the gross cropped area between 1995 and 2010 was 3 per cent in the state. These findings came out as part of a nationwide study titled ‘Socio-Economic impact assessment of Bt Cotton in India’, which was launched here on Wednesday. The study was conducted by Council for Social Development (CSD), India, a leading development research institute. The survey was conducted in Dharwad with a sample size of 140 farmers and 40 agricultural labourers for Karnataka. In Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, the suicide figure varied between 1-4 per cent. Farmers in the central Indian region blamed suicides mainly on low and erratic nature of rainfall. Being rainfed regions, it is difficult for farmers to produce a good yield. Unavailability of timely credit and fluctuating Cotton prices are factors for farmer suicides too, the study notes. Significantly, Karnataka witnessed an increase in cotton area under cultivation with four lakh hectares between 2009-11 from a meagre 0.18 lakh hectares in 2004-05. In Karnataka, the average income of farmers increased by almost 740 per cent, the growth rate of cotton area by 2.07 per cent and average cotton productivity by 8.45 per cent, and per hectare value of production by 83.03 per cent across the state, said the study. Nationally, the cultivation of hybrid BT Cotton seeds, which began in 2002-03, has seen the average income of farmers increase by almost 375 per cent, the growth rate of cotton yield by 4.95 per cent, cotton area by 4.91 per cent and production by 9.25 per cent across nine major cotton growing states in India. “Key findings from this study showed a positive impact of Bt Cotton on the social and economical development of farmers in Karnataka and even nationally. The field survey showed that 100 per cent of farmers surveyed in Karnataka cultivated Bt Cotton and reaped substantial benefits with its adoption,” said Ajay Jakhar, Chairman of Bharat Krishak Samaj (BKS).... (Times of India 21/6/12)

Punjab budgets for farm suicides (20)
Chandigarh: Punjab’s agricultural sector grew at 1.6 per cent during the 11th Plan against the national average of 3.41 per cent. The growth is tardy owing to near saturation in productivity. The rural debts in Punjab are estimated to be Rs 35,000 crore. The number of indebted rural households in Punjab is 66 per cent, third highest in the country after Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The Government of India’s debt waiver scheme of 2008-09 failed to benefit state farmers as there are less number of small and marginal farmers and few loan defaulters in the state,” Punjab Finance Minister Parminder Singh Dhindsa said while announcing a first-of-its-kind allocation in the state budget presented this week — Rs 30 crore for suicide-hit families. The Rs 2 lakh per family compensation will be distributed based on the report of a study commissioned by the government on farmer and farm labour suicides. But the report of the survey conducted by Punjabi University, Patiala; Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana; and Guru Nanak Dev
University, Amritsar, shows the amount sanctioned in the budget may not be enough. In its report submitted to the revenue department, PAU, which studied the six worst-affected districts of Bathinda, Sangrur, Mansa, Barnala, Ludhiana and Moga, has put the number of affected families at over 6,000 since 2000. The figure of other two universities is comparatively less, nearly 500, in the remaining districts. This report, more or less like a household census, will be the first authentic survey documenting the spate of suicides among farmers and agricultural workers. But the Punjab government's decision to fix a price for farmer suicides has triggered a controversy, with the opposition Congress questioning the rationale of fixing an outlay in the budget without citing the figure of suicide-hit families. “Are they saying just 1,500 families have witnessed farmer suicides, to put an allocation of Rs 30 crore in the budget. This defies logic and will encourage suicides. The government is not even utilising the money it receives under Centrally-sponsored schemes for the farm sector, while saying it is reeling under crisis. The only support for farm sector is coming as free power to farmers,” says Leader of the Opposition Sunil Jakhar. Dhindsa says the allocation starting from this budget will be factored in every year depending on the criteria worked out by the revenue department, based on the findings of the study. But the government may have to do more than just allocate funds. The study of PAU has highlighted declining farm incomes as the main underlying cause for suicides. Senior economist Sukhpal Singh, who headed the PAU study, says there is a mismatch between input costs and the minimum support price for crops. “While the MSP grew by half to two-and-a-half per cent in last few years, the input cost has gone up by nine per cent. There is a seven per cent gap, which forces farmers to borrow at high interest rates,” he says……(The Financial Express 22/6/12)

Burdwan: 16 farmer suicides in one year despite bumper rice crop (20)
Burdwan: Burdwan may be the Rice Bowl of Bengal. However, its farmers are committing suicide. Here, rice is not a source of prosperity but of anguish. Spiralling debt has reportedly driven 16 farmers here to commit suicide in the past one year. Fifty-four-year-old Amiya Saha was one such farmer. The memories haunt his wife, but what hurts more is the continued government denials that something is amiss here. Says Jayanta Saha, a farmer, "It is unfortunate that the government says that there haven't been any farmer suicides. As if we don't count." Meanwhile another farmer, Bama Pada Mallik has his daughters to help him with the work in the fields. He does not have the money to hire labourers. Hence, the girls miss their school to assist their father. The government's low procurement prices are not helping the matter either. Bama Pada doesn't know how he will make ends meet. He says, "The government's procurement price of paddy is less than the cost of rice. We produce this rice and when we buy it outside, it becomes expensive." "If this continues, we will die hungry," he laments. In Bengal, the problem is of plenty. Despite a bumper crop, farmers like Nizamuddin Ahmed are unable to sell their produce due to low procurement prices of the government. Though middlemen have been done away with, and farmers can directly sell their crop to the mill owners, they continue to be exploited. Says Ahmed, "There are many good schemes announced by the government but they are not implemented properly. Mill owners are harassing us, they give us cheques after months and discard several sacks thus leading to wastage." The state government has admitted there are issues. Says Agriculture Minister Rabindranath Bhattacharya, "It is true that some mill owners are exploiting farmers. There is also the problem of storage to keep the grain." There have been numerous plans of ushering the second Green Revolution in India, especially in the East, with numerous pro-farmer policies. Yet what is still ailing the farmers of Bengal? Perhaps it is time to take lessons and bridge the gap between what is on paper and what is clearly missing on the ground before more farmers are forced to take their lives. (CNN-IBN 24/6/12)

SUCI-C urges all parties to join Singur farmers’ movement (4)
Singur (West Bengal), July 1 : Advocating Singur farmers "right to snatch back their land", the Socialist Unity Centre of India-Communist (SUCI-C) Sunday urged political parties to join peasants of this rural belt of West Bengal in their fight for justice. "Getting back their land is the only justice for the farmers of Singur and for that to happen they will have to snatch back the land. They cannot expect to get back the land through legal battles," said SUCI-C legislator Tarun Naskar, who led a rally in this rural belt of Hooghly district demanding the farmers be given a right to reclaim their land. "We are with the Krishijami Raksha Committee in its endeavour to get back their land and I urge all the parties to come together and join them," he added. Singur is gradually turning into an epicentre of the political theatre following the recent court verdict cancelling the Singur land law as "unconstitutional".Political parties hit the roads showing their solidarity with the peasants here whose land was allegedly acquired forcibly by the then Left Front
government to set up an industrial unit. If it was the SUCI-C Sunday, on Saturday the Congress and the Trinamool Congress -- allies both at the centre and in the state -- separately hit the streets at Singur on the issue of returning land to the "unwilling farmers". While the Congress accused its ally of "playing politics at the cost of farmers", the Trinamool retorted that the Congress was "derailing the government's initiative" to rehabilitate the farmers. Meanwhile, the Trinamool Sunday reiterated its promise to return the land to the unwilling farmers. "The law has been made in the interest of the people; not the other way around. The process has been held up because of some legal hassles, but we are committed to the promise of returning the land," party general secretary and Railway Minister Mukul Roy said in Kolkata. (IANS) (New Kerala 1/7/12)

Six more Vidarbha farmers commit suicides, says NGO (20)
Nagpur: Six more Maharashtra farmers committed suicide in the last 72 hours, taking this year's toll to 422 in the Vidarbha region, said an NGO Sunday. Delayed rains have caused panic among farmers who had sown seeds early June as there was heavy downpour for two days. The weather department had forecast a normal monsoon. However, there has been no rainfall since then, said Kishor Tiwari, president of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a farmers' advocacy group. Tiwari said those who committed suicide in the last two days are Dhyanchand Tayade of Akola, Rajendra Wadhai of Gondia, Ramdas Hingwe of Wardha, Babulal Rathod of Akola, Vijay Pimpalshende and Ambadas Hatgoankar of Yavatmal. The ground water level in Maharashtra has fallen to an alarming level and uncontrolled water pumping was adding to the agrarian crisis in the region, Tiwari said. He added that rain sensitive crop like Bt. Cotton was making the situation difficult. Farmers who planned to shift to other crops like pulses did not get good quality seeds. "We demand immediate government intervention to provide direct aid and quality seeds for the dry land farmers who plan to grow pulses, jawar, bajara and maize," he added. (Zee News 2/7/12)

Focus on research in agriculture, not on giving subsidy to farmers: expert (20)
Bijapur, July 4, 2012: Eli Verad, an Israeli agriculture expert and agro-economist, has said that the Indian government was giving more importance to agriculture subsidy than giving importance to research and innovation in the field of agriculture to make farmers self-reliant and also augment agricultural production. “Subsidy should indeed be given to farmers but it should not be the primary focus as it does not provide lasting and effective solution to the problems in the agricultural sector in India”, he said. Mr. Eli Verad who was here to participate in workshop for sugarcane farmers, told The Hindu that India should focus on research and disseminate the research findings among farmers just like the China government does. “Unlike India, the Chinese government does not offer several financial benefits to farmers, instead it spends a significant portion of its budget on research and innovation to ensure that farmers use modern methods to increase agricultural productivity, which in turn adds to the revenue of the country”, he said. Mr. Eli Verad, Research and Development Head, Netafim Irrigation Pvt. Ltd., also works for several international universities. According to him, Indian agro-economists do not focus on micro-irrigation, soil analyses and nutrient management of crop. Indian agro-economists are more bothered about crop yield rather than critical aspects that determine the quantity and quality of the crop. “India has attained success in the field of information technology and bio-technology, but it is necessary for the country with the second largest population in the world to conduct extensive research in the field of agriculture”, he noted. Mr. Eli Verad, who hails from Israel, said that his country has pioneered in drip irrigation system and used it effectively. He suggested that if India adopted drip irrigation system, it could save a lot of water. “On an average, Indian paddy growers use 15,000 to 20,000 litres of water to produce one kg of rice. By adopting drip irrigation system, the same quantity of rice can be produced using 4,000 litres of water”, he said. According to him, cultivation of paddy increases carbon emission. If drip irrigation is adopted to grow paddy, it will not only increase the yield by 20 per cent but will also reduce carbon emission. Mr. Eli Verad said that as a research fellow, he was concentrating more on enhancing the strength of roots of plants as he felt that the both the quality and quantity of foodgrains could be augmented if root system is strengthened. (The Hindu 4/7/12)

Truant monsoon forces four farmers to end life in 48 hrs (20)
Mumbai: The erratic progress of the monsoon has made four distressed farmers from Vidarbha commit suicide in the last 48 hours alone. Six others had done the same last week. Activists fear that if rains are delayed further, there could be a sharp increase in the tally of farmers' suicides in Vidarbha from 422 from January this year. Kishore Tiwari of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti says "An arid Vidarbha has had erratic
rains since 2010. This year, too, the second week of June saw very heavy rains in some blocks. This was followed by normal monsoon as forecast by the metrological department. On cue, farmers finished sowing, only to face a complete dry spell for 20 days. They were forced to watch the heat scorch both their freshly sown crop and their hopes of good production.” Tiwari takes umbrage at agriculture minister Sharad Pawar’s comment that the delay in monsoon is not a matter of concern. “Coming on the heels of the National Crime Records Bureau’s announcement that Maharashtra saw the largest number of farmers’ suicides in 2011, this seems not only insensitive, but is also a mockery of the farmers’ distress.” Official figures show that less than 25% of the over three million cotton farmers are covered by institutional banks and that crop loan disbursement target is less than 40% of Nabard’s (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development) credit outlay to the region. “The government knows credit crunch is the real issue and credit-starved, debt-trapped farmers are being pushed to end their lives, but we haven’t seen the government being pro-active in this regard,” alleges Tiwari. “At least now, it should intervene and restructure crop loans.” “The water in dams and reservoirs is fast depleting. Ground water levels have dropped due to over-exploitation. Those moving away from cotton and soya, which ruin both the ecosystem and their lives, to traditional crops which require less water, like pulses, groundnut, jowar and bajra, should be given incentives,” he urges. (DNA 6/7/12)

‘Compensate kin of farmer who killed self’ (20)
BHIWANDI: The Thane-based Shramjeevi Sangathana has demanded that the government compensate the family of Haribhau Tanpude (45), the farmer who committed suicide as he was unable to repay his debts after all his crops were destroyed. The Sangathana’s president Vivek Pandit demanded the government also compensate farmers who have lost their first crop due to the delayed monsoon. “Farmers are in a very critical state and crops sown by them have already been destroyed. The government should, after studying their losses, compensate them immediately or more such incidents might happen in future.” Tanpude, from Bedegaon village in Bhiwandi taluka, Thane, allegedly committed suicide on Wednesday by consuming pesticide. He was reportedly upset as he had debts of Rs 27,000 from the local government-run Sahakari bank and he had no means to repay after all his crops were destroyed 20 days ago due to lack of rain. On Friday, after around 48 hours of the incident, the Ganeshpuri police team visited the spot and collected pesticide bottles. Zilla parishad member Sangeeta Bomte, who visited the victim’s family, approached the Thane collector seeking action against the rural hospital where the victim was taken but died due to lack of treatment as there were no doctors present.(Times of India 7/7/12)

‘Amendments to Land Reforms Act will marginalise farmers’ (20)
Bangalore: Airing apprehensions that the proposed amendments to the Karnataka Land Reforms Act, 1974, would lead to disastrous consequences, West Bengal’s leader of the Opposition in the Assembly Suryakant Mishra said that the amendments, if implemented, would create a new class of landlords. The proposed Bill is expected to be tabled during the Legislature session starting on July 16. Addressing the gathering during a seminar organised by the Karnataka Prantha Raitha Sangha (KPRS) here on Saturday, Mishra said the amendments will further marginalise the farmers. The continued reforms to the Bill had led to an increase in the incidences of farmers’ suicides. Since the late 1990s, around 2.70 lakh farmers’ suicides have been recorded across the nation. Mishra said Karnataka has been in the forefront in introducing inflexible impositions by bringing in reforms related to agriculture sector. These changes, he said, will impact the national sovereignty adversely. He said the land ceiling in West Bengal was fixed at 25 acres per family and if the Karnataka government went ahead with its proposal to increase the limit from 54 acres per family to 108 acres, it would result in the existing large land holders becoming richer by thousands of acres. The Bill also proposes to reclassify the meaning of agricultural activities and bring in fertiliser / pesticide and other agriculture-based industries, research institutes, etc, under ‘agricultural’ activities. KPRS general secretary B C Byya Reddy said the farmers will oppose the new Bill by burning copies of it across the State.(Deccan Herald 8/7/12)

Woes of Bundelkhand farmers continue, eyes on High court (20)
Banda/Chitrakoot, Jul 10 : Sudden spurt in suicides by the farmers in Bundelkhand in the recent past has again raised a question on the political and administrative sensitivity of the Uttar Pradesh government. Harassment of the banks and financial institutions in realising the loan amount from the farmers even after a stay by the Allahabad High Court last year has forced about 25 farmers to end their lives forcing
their families starve in the past four months. In 2010, over 583 suicides were reported while in 2011 it crossed 600 mark, after which the HC took the cognisance. The total debt in 2010 of the farmer was to the tune of Rs 3,613 crore which rose to Rs 4,370 crore in 2011. Still today farmers are committing suicides on day-to-day basis where almost all the farmers have a debt between Rs 50,000 to Rs 8 lakh on their heads. The HC is expected to hear the plight of the farmers of Bundelkhand next week after they took a suo motu cognisance of a media report on June 15, 2011 asking the government to evolve any policy to help the farmers and their families facing loan debt. The figure of the suicides and loan amounts were mentioned in the report taken cognizance of by the High Court. The Bundelkhand region had been a political battleground between the previous Mayawati-led BSP government and the Congress with party general secretary Rahul Gandhi visiting the region several times during last few years. (UNI) (New Kerala 10/7/12)

Trade policies behind farmer suicides: Survey (20)
PUNE: Irrational trade policies and shrinking farm holdings are among the reasons that lead farmers to commit suicide in Maharashtra. Sangeeta Shroff, an associate professor with the Agro Economic Research centre at the city-based Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, said the Union government's policies from 1997 to 2003 discouraged cotton export and promoted import. As a result, farmers incurred losses, leading to frustration and suicides. She pointed out a recent National Sample Survey in which many farmers said they do not want to continue farming, but had no alternate available. The Agro Economic Research centre is set up by the Union government and various reports are commissioned by the Union Planning Commission, the State Planning Commission and other ministries. As per the latest National Crime Records Bureau report, 3,337 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra 2011, which is the highest in the country. This is worse than 2010 when the state recorded 3,141 suicides. As many as 14,004 farmers in the country ended their lives in 2011. Shroff has submitted various reports about the implementation of the Union government's 2006 debt waiver package for Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala. Speaking to TOI, Shroff said, "Cotton import was encouraged by the Union government from 1996 to 2003, which led to crashing of cotton prices in the domestic market. It led to further distress and frustration among the farmers. In Maharashtra, the Vidarbha region is mostly dependent on rainfall, which increased the stress on farmers. The situation turned so bad that in the next three years the number of farmers' suicides increased drastically." In 2003, 170 farmers committed suicide. During the subsequent three years, the number increased to 620 in 2004, 572 in 2005 and 1,427 in 2006. Shroff also said that as per the figures released by Cotton Advisory Board, cotton import increased from 30,000 bales (one bale of cotton weighs 170 kg) in 1996 to 17.67 lakh bales in 2003. It was the same period, when internationally the cotton prices dipped from 78.6 cents per pound in 1996-97 to 55.7 cents per pound in 2002-03. It clearly showed that low price badly affected farmers' income, Shroff said. "Incidentally, BT cotton was introduced in 2002. Due to its strong genetic resistance to major pests - farmers shifted from conventional seed to BT. The traders saw the opportunity and prices of BT cotton were artificially inflated. Though the cotton yield increased, the production cost went up due to high cost of seeds. However, the cotton market was already down due to ongoing imports. This led to more distress," Shroff said. On the state's record of maximum farmer suicides in 2010 and 2011, Shroff said, "The Union government allowed export of 58 lakh bales in 2006-07. The export jumped to 88.50 lakh bales in the next year. In 2008-09 the export dropped to 35 lakh bales and it again jumped to 83 lakh bales in 2009-10. In 2010-11, we exported 55 lakh bales. All these figures show the Union government's irrational export policy. It has not only frustrated farmers, but international buyers also lost confidence. There is a strong possibility of Indian government giving more importance to the interest of domestic textile industry at the cost of farmers' interest."..... (Times of India 13/7/12)

Crop damage from frost, cold now a natural calamity (20)
NEW DELHI: From now on, damage to crops due to extreme cold or frost will be considered a natural calamity and the affected farmers will be eligible for financial relief from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) or the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF). The Union Cabinet, at a meeting on Thursday, approved the recommendation of the Group of Ministers (GoM) on Drought to this effect. So far, crops damaged in natural calamities such as drought, floods, cyclone, earthquake, fire, flood, tsunami, hailstorm, landslip, avalanche, cloud burst and pest attack were eligible for relief under the SDRF and NDRF. However, since the incidence of damage to crops in extreme cold or frost has gone up in recent years, the government set up the EGoM. The EGoM, earlier headed by Pranab Mukherjee, will
now be chaired by Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar, it is learnt. In another decision, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs set the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane, payable by sugar mills to farmers, for 2012-13 at Rs. 170 a quintal linked to a basic recovery rate of 9.5 per cent, subject to a premium of Rs. 1.79 a quintal for every 0.1 percentage point increase in recovery above that level. This has been raised from Rs. 145 a quintal in 2011-12. (The Hindu 21/7/12)

Farmers seek judicial probe into Rewari violence (20)
REWARI: A farmer leader on Monday demanded a judicial probe into the clashes between police and farmers, protesting land acquisition in Haryana’s Rewari district, that left at least 20 people injured a day earlier. “Farmers alone cannot be blamed for any of these incidents as the police had first charged at them without provocation. A judicial inquiry into the incidents would bring out the truth,” said Bhumi Adhigrahan Virodhi Sangharsh Samiti president Ram Kishan Mehalwal. He asked the government to withdraw criminal cases against the farmers, while reiterating his demand that the entire industrial project proposed over 3,600 acres across 16 villages be scrapped. The representatives of the organization would meet Haryana chief minister over the issue on July 25. The farmers had suspended their agitation on Sunday night and lifted the blockade on Delhi-Jaipur highway after the government has announced to defer the land acquisition. Rewari deputy commissioner C G Ranjikanthan said the situation had normalized with the restoration of the traffic along the highway. “We are facilitating a dialogue between the farmers and the government and hope that the issue would be sorted out soon to the satisfaction of the farmers.” Farmers say a sense of insecurity, shrinking agriculture holdings and low rates offered for land in Haryana led to the Rewari violence. “Farmers would be rendered landless after handing over the land at low prices while the government would then allot the industrial plots at a premium to the industrialists. The government seems to be acting like a middle man. The government should first protect the farmers’ interest while undertaking industrialization,” said Mehalwal. Farmers said the state government is offering around Rs 45 lakh per acre to them, while the existing market rate is over Rs 4 crore in the NCR region. A farmer, who was part of the mob that stoned cops and set vehicles on fire, said the huge difference between the rates angered them. “The farmers are feeling cheated at the hands of the government. Anyone would feel cheated if given Rs 45 lakh instead of over Rs 4 crore for an acre,” said real estate expert Dinesh Saini. A multi-modal logistics hub is proposed to come up in Rewari as part of the ambitious Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor. (Times of India 24/7/12)

Farm worker killed at meet over wages (20)
Burdwan, July 23: A 65-year-old labourer was allegedly beaten to death by a group of farmers in Burdwan when a meeting to discuss the workers’ demand for a revision of daily wages escalated into a clash. Radhanath Soren, who is also a CPM worker, was taken to Jamalpur health centre where he was pronounced dead. Over 100 farm labourers in Nabagram have for the past three days refused to cultivate the fields at a time seeds are being sown for the aman (monsoon) crop. The workers have been demanding that their daily wage be increased by Rs 50-60 to Rs 120. Today, the farmers, most of whom are Trinamul supporters, called the labourers to a meeting to discuss their demand. The meeting, which was attended by around 60 farmers and 75 labourers, started with a bargain but it soon snowballed into an argument and then a clash, Radhanath’s grandson Sunil said. “We (the labourers) scaled down our demand to Rs 100 a day (from Rs 120) but they would not agree to anything more than Rs 80. An argument broke out and some farmers slapped and punched some of us. “My grandfather went to pacify both the sides but he was kicked and punched by the farmers. We took him to Jamalpur health centre but he was declared dead there,” Sunil said. District superintendent of police S.M.H. Meerza said seven persons have been arrested. Asked if Radhanath was singled out because of his links with the CPM, another police officer ruled out such a possibility. Radhanath’s son Sahadeb, lodged an FIR on the basis of which the arrests were made, the officer said. Among the arrested persons were Ashok Ghosh, the Trinamul president in Nabagram gram panchayat. District CPM secretary Amal Haldar said Radhanath was killed “because he was leading the agitation against the farmers”. “We have called a 12-hour strike in Jamalpur tomorrow,” Haldar added. Local Trinamul MLA Ujjal Pramanik denied Radhanath was beaten to death by the farmers and insisted he died of a heart attack. “After the meeting ended, Radhanath returned home and died of a heart attack after two hours. Trinamul has nothing to do with his death. The CPM is trying to politicise the incident,” Pramanik said. According to the Burdwan assistant labour commissioner, Asit Baran Roy, there are three rates fixed by the government for farm labourers. “For skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled farm labourers, the daily rates range from Rs 155 to Rs 202,” Roy said.
An official of the labour department admitted that in many areas in the district, employers do not pay the government rates to the labourers. (Telegraph 24/7/12)

Farmers resorted to distress sale of cattle in north-Karnataka (20)
HUBLI: Unable to feed their livestock, many farmers in north-karnataka have resorted to distress sale of cattle for throw away prices. Severe drought has dealt a death blow to the farmers and driving them to sell their livestock to butchers now. Situation is so grim and distressing that, farmers are selling their cattle for less than even 50% of the original price they bought in market. Most of the farmers in Bijapur, Dharwad, Bagalkot, Haveri, Gadag are selling off their livestock at very low prices in cattle market. According to Parmesh Chatradmath, APMC Marketing officer, Haveri and Ramanna Kenchalli, farmers leader, said, farmer will have to shell out Rs 50000 to 80000 to buy a good pair of cattle (cows) while Rs 25000 to 30000 for a pair of buffaloes. It is very shocking that farmers are today selling cows for just Rs 15000 to 20000 while buffaloes for Rs 8000 to 10000. Main buyers in the market are butchers. After buying them, they are also transporting them to neighboring states- Goa and Maharashtra. Cattle are now finding their way to abattoirs. In Jumanal village of Bijapur where 60 farmer families had 1-2 pairs of cows but 55 of them have sold off their livestock at throw away prices, which only indicates how farmers are selling off their livestock in distress. Though government had opened cattle sheds in drought affected districts, it failed to make fodder and water arrangements for livestock. Lack of fodder and water are the main reasons for distress sale of cows and cattle. ”I bought a pair of cow at Rs 50000 a few months back, but I had to sell them at Rs 20000 due to lack fodder and scarcity of water in our village”, said, Muttu Naik, farmer of Nagaralli of Mundargi taluk. (Times of India 25/7/12)

Coop crop loans up to Rs. 25,000 to be waived (20)
Bangalore: In a major relief to 16 lakh farming families suffering from severe drought across the State, Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar on Tuesday announced in the Legislative Assembly waiver of agricultural cooperative society loans up to Rs. 25,000 and the interest thereon. Replying to the debate on drought, Mr. Shettar said the State Government would incur an extra expenditure of Rs. 3,500 crore, which would be sanctioned by it as a grant. He said the special package would apply to the arrears towards the loan extended between August 1, 2011 and June 30, 2012 not repaid to the societies. Mr. Shettar requested Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah to pressure Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to sanction Rs. 4,500 crore to the State government and help farmers, as 20 to 30 per cent of crops sown may be lost if there was no rain for another 10 days. However, the Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) members staged a walk-out protesting against the government’s failure to announce a comprehensive relief package to farmers, shepherds and other sections of people, who were suffering from the drought. When Mr. Siddaramaiah wanted the reaction of former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa on this meagre relief, the latter said that he was happy, evoking wry remarks from the Congress benches. Mr. Revanna recalled that Mr. Yeddyurappa, when he was Finance Minister in the H.D. Kumaraswamy ministry, had objected to waiving of loans and added that this was only to wash off the sins committed by the BJP government in the last four years. (The Hindu 25/7/12)

Jharkhand sanctions Rs 410 cr relief package for kharif crop damage (20)
Kolkata/Ranchi: The state chief minister Arjun Munda announced a relief package to the vextent of Rs 410 crore for the relief to 39 lakh farmers in the state owing to adverse impact of lowest rainfall this year in comparison with last few years affecting severe drought like condition throughout 24 districts of the state. Of the sanctioned amount of Rs 410 crore, Rs 150 crore will be provided to the farmers to purchase diesel for irrigation purpose and Rs 240 crore will be utilizes by 39 lakh farmers as interest free loan through banks. Official source claimed that about 20 lakh farmers’ family had been provided kisan credit cards and in another round 9 lakh more households would be brought to kisan credit card scheme under a special drive for kharif crops.Chief minister held an emergent meeting with senior bureaucrats - development commissioner Debashish Gupta, agriculture secretary Arun Kumar Singh, forest secretary Alka Tiwary, planning secretary Avinash Kumar and agriculture director K K Soan in the wake of a strong letter written to chief minister by the Co-ordination Committee chairperson also an alliance partner- Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) chief ShibuSoren recently. Besides, several opposition parties also demonstrated against the action of the chief minister for allowing the state chief secretary S K Choudhary who is to retire after four months and the principal secretary to chief minister D K Tiwari to London on July 25 to catch Olympics live on a 10-day “ exposure trip”. (Business Standard 31/7/12)
4 suicides in Vidarbha in 48 hours

Mumbai: The cotton-growing belt of Vidarbha is facing an acute problem reporting four cases of suicides in the last 48 hours following failure of crop due to severe drought situation. The recent suicides take the total tally this year to an alarming 410 (January to July). Majority of these farmers had taken loans from the private sector. Climate change leading to delayed rains have caught the small and marginal farmers reeling under heavy debt. Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan has sought the statistics of farmers who are badly affected by the drought in the six distressed districts of Vidarbha to work out an economic package this week. He has conveyed to the department of relief and rehabilitation to extend financial help immediately to the small and marginal farmers in the region. According to Vidarbha Janandolan Samiti president Kishore Tiwari, “The delayed monsoon has compounded the problems for Vidarbha farmers. In the last fortnight the region has almost witnessed ten cases of suicides unable to repay the heavy loans taken from moneylenders and financial institutions due to crop failure.” The statistics in Vidarbha region of farmers suicides are alarming. They show that in the year 2012 (January to July), there were 410 cases of farmers deaths. The financial institutions have been able to provide loans to only 40% of the 30 lakh farmers in the region. Senior officials in the agriculture department confirmed, “The farmers suicides in Vidarbha region have risen. Small and marginal farmers who depend on the single crop are reeling under severe financial problems.” The ministry sources admitted, “The BT Cotton production which appeared lucrative is not working with the small and marginal farmers. Even a single crop failure hits them hard as they have to make huge investments in terms of purchasing seeds and fertilisers.” Tiwari said, “Farmers are seeking seeds for sowing jowar, bajra, groundnuts and pulses on dry land.” (DNA 5/8/12)

Farmers lay siege to Collectorate for scrapping KSEZ

Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, Aug 4 (UNI) Bookmark and Share

Farmers owing allegiance to Andhra Pradesh Rythu Sangham today laid siege to Collectorate demanding scrapping of the Kakinada SEZ which has displaced a large number of farmer families with the acquisition of over 12,000 acres of fertile land by luring them with jobs in industries. They also formed a human chain earlier at the Zilla Parishad Centre denouncing the state and Central Governments for turning a deaf ear to farmers' problems. The stir was organised by the AP Rythu Sangham as a part of its 'Rythu Poru Baata' that started on August 1 at Sompeta in Srikakulam district. AP Rythu Sangham State Secretary Ravula Venkaiah, who led the stir, told mediapersons that both the state and Central Governments had left the farmers in the lurch with their lopsided policies. He said the farmers were now restive and no more tolerant to the injustice being meted out to them. He said the AP Rythu Sangham was demanding among other things introduction of a special budget for agriculture on the lines of railway budget and scrapping of Land Acquisition Act,1894. The government should immediately convene an all party meeting on the farmers problems, including those displaced under irrigation projects and special economic zones. Later, he called on Collector Neethu Kumari in a delegation and presented a memorandum on the farmers problems. (UNI) (New Kerala 5/8/12)

Organic works magic for Punjab again

Chandigarh: While problems for farmers in Punjab, the foodgrains bowl of the country, have been mounting manifold, be it suicides or cancer, response of the state government has been ungenrous. Instead it is Kheti Virasat Mission, an NGO, that has been giving hope and reprieve to the distraught farmers, particularly in the Malwa region. Umendra Dutt, who has been running the Mission for the last more than five years in Punjab, says “there is significant scientific evidence available today which shows beyond doubt that the soil, water and air of Punjab have been grossly polluted with highly poisonous/toxic substances. The state is sitting on a volcano of environmental health crisis, which is affecting not only human beings but all other living species.” “Use of highly poisonous agro-chemicals (pesticides, herbicides and chemical fertilisers); discharge of untreated or partially treated industrial waste into natural water bodies and coal-based power plants have been causing devastation in the state”. While trying to motivate farmers to get back to organic farming, he said, over 3,000 farmers had changed their way to farming. “They don’t take loans and depend largely on manure from the cattle herd for their produce”, he added. “We are confronting the entire political class with some hard questions related to destruction of ecology, contamination of food chain and high prevalence of environmental toxins in Punjab”, said Dutt. “Farmers under the mission use jeevaamrita (a cow urine based microbial preparation) to revive microbial activity in soil. With the application of jeevaamrita and ghan jeevaamrita (a solid form of jeevaamrita), the
soil is gradually becoming rich in the humus, yield has increased and other life forms are coming back in the fields”, says Charanjeet Singh Punni, a farmer from Chaina village and a natural farming trainer. (DNA 6/8/12)

'New thermal power plants to escalate Vidarbha farm crisis' (20)
New Delhi: Large clusters of coal-fired power plants proposed in Maharashtra's Vidarbha - known for farmers’ suicides - may bring down the future availability of water in the Wardha river and affect irrigation of farmland in the region, says a study released Tuesday. The study, commissioned by Greenpeace, by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), assessing the impact of coal power plants in the Wardha river basin found that 71 new projects have been given clearance while four are already running. "It is not clear on what basis the state government of Maharashtra took the decision to divert more than 390 million cubic metres from Vidarbha's reservoirs between 2003 and 2011. This diversion of water, without any assessment of its impact on irrigation and environmental flows needs immediate reconsideration," said Greenpeace campaigner Jai Krishna. According to Greenpeace, the central government has accorded environmental clearances for almost 200 gigawatts (GW) of thermal power plants and about 500 GW of clearances are in the pipeline. "The total clearances that might be accorded (700 GW) is seven times more than power generation capacity proposed to be added by the 12th Five Year Plan," he said. Greenpeace recommends an immediate moratorium on further environment clearances to coal power plants in Vidarbha and the existing clearances must be examined on the basis of a cumulative water impact. (IANS) (New Kerala 8/8/12)

‘State should focus on productivity in rainfed areas’ (20)
Bangalore: Karnataka, which is second to Rajasthan in total rainfed agricultural area, needs innovative agricultural policy with focus on increasing productivity in rainfed areas, P.K. Shetty, professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, has said. He was speaking at a national-level workshop on ‘Innovation in agricultural policies, schemes, programmes in India’ here on Friday. He said about 8.2 million hectares of the total 12.3 million hectare of cultivated land in Karnataka was rainfed. Dr. Shetty said the government had to focus on development of drought-tolerant, less water-intensive and short-duration crops. He said Karnataka could adopt many cost-effective innovative irrigation techniques developed in Israel. It was also important to enhance soil moisture conservation techniques, he added. H.S. Vijay Kumar, Registrar, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, said the minimum support price (MSP) policy had no meaning in most States as it was not coupled with a procurement policy. Future policy should concentrate on market price of crops and the MSP should not be just for 24 forecast crop but for other crops as well, he said. (The Hindu 11/8/12)

Ghodiyal shows the way in time of drought (20)
PALANPUR: At a time, when a major portion of the state is grappling with water scarcity, Ghodiyal village of Vadgam taluka located 18 km from here has set an example in judicious management of water. The villagers have successfully implemented drip irrigation in this arid area where scarcity is a common phenomenon. "Barring a few people, the entire village has taken to drip irrigation. As much as 559 hectares of land is presently covered under drip irrigation,” said Dashrathji Hidiyol, sarpanch of the village. The villagers claim that their income has gone up ever since they began to use water judiciously. Bhikhabhai Loh, whose annual income from agriculture has gone up to Rs 45 lakh from Rs 12 lakh, said, "We are determined to eradicate poverty by ushering in an agriculture revolution that would benefit all the 3,500 families here through wise water management." Farmers in the village claim that they are moving forward in the direction of making optimum use of modern technology to enhance their production and income. Loh said, "We have set up a huge cold storage with a capacity to accommodate 1.5 lakh bags of potatoes besides tuber crops, vegetables, and linseed. This has been done on a cooperative basis." The villagers plan to set up at least 15 greenhouses at Ghodiyal soon. The administration too acknowledges the transformation that has been brought about by the farmers of the village. "I am sure Ghodiyal and a few other villages in the region ultimately will pave way for complete removal of conventional modes of irrigation,"said district collector J B Vora. (Times of India 14/8/12)

152 farmers kill self since April (20)
New Delhi: At least one farmer has killed himself every day since April this year due to indebtedness, drought, crop-failure or socio-economic and personal reasons. Of the 152 farmer suicides recorded in the
country in 2012-2013 so far, 118 were in Maharashtra alone, the government said on Tuesday. “Reasons for suicide by farmers, as reported by state governments, are manifold, which inter-alia include indebtedness, crop failure, drought, socio-economic and personal,” Minister of State for Agriculture Harish Rawat said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha. Andhra Pradesh ranks second with 33 cases of suicides by farmers. In Karnataka, there has been a reported case of farmer suicide this year. Incidentally, Maharashtra and Karnataka are the worst affected by the drought this year. The southwest monsoon in parts of Maharashtra was 20-30 per cent below normal till August 14 this year, while in north and south Karnataka, it is around 30 per cent below normal. According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), around 10.3 per cent of the total suicides in the country in 2011 were those involved in farming and agriculture activities. The total number of suicides across the country in 2011 was around 1,35,585. The government had announced a rehabilitation package for 31 districts, which are prone to farmer suicides, in 2006. Of the districts, 16 are in Andhra Pradesh, six each in Karnataka and Maharashtra, and three in Kerala. “In view of the deficient rainfall, the government has announced financial schemes and other measures, including enhancement of ceiling on seed subsidy in pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals, for the affected states,” Rawat said. (Business Standard 15/8/12)

Govt asks LS speaker to set up JPC on farmers’ suicides (20)

New Delhi: The government has accepted the BJP’s demand to set up a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to look into the issue of farmers’ suicides in many states and asked Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar to consider its formation quickly. The government’s view has been conveyed by parliamentary affairs minister Pawan Kumar Bansal in a letter to the speaker on Tuesday, following his discussions with agriculture minister Sharad Pawar. It will also be for the first time that two JPCs will be functioning simultaneously, since the panel probing the 2G scam is already conducting its proceedings. In his letter, Bansal has informed the speaker that a large number of MPs have urged Pawar to set up the JPC. Bansal has forwarded Pawar’s letter to Kumar, in which the agriculture minister has argued for “empowering the JPC with a mandate to visit states affected by farmers suicides and it should then come up with concrete recommendations to address the issue.” Pawar has also referred to a letter written to him by BJP president Nitin Gadkari, who sought steps from the government to end the “farmers distress” and formation of a JPC. Pawar has reminded Bansal that he had written to him on December 27, 2011, following a commitment given by him in the Rajya Sabha on December 19. Pawar had favoured setting-up of a JPC in the House following a major contradiction between the figures of farmers suicides provided by state governments and the National Crimes Record Bureau (NCRB). “The NCRB has reported 15,900 cases whereas the states have reported 800,” he had said. (Hindustan Times 16/8/12)

Amid dry spell, agri cheer from central, eastern India (20)

New Delhi: Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, hitherto laggards in agriculture, have emerged as leading states here, recording a farm growth better than Punjab and Uttar Pradesh in recent years. This has provided a much-needed buffer against any eventuality. For example, in 2012, any possibility of the paddy harvest faltering in the northern states of Punjab and Haryana would be compensated by the rise in harvests in the eastern and central states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh. However, experts caution that these are still a long way from becoming a food bowl for the country. Farm growth is very volatile in these regions. Vast tracts are still dependent on the monsoon, despite some improvement in irrigation facilities in recent years. Second, they say the claims of some of these states to post double-digit growth rates for the next five years should be taken with a pinch of salt. These promises are based on agricultural growth without adjusting for inflation, they warn. Two factors, mainly the price of farm produce and the development of farming infrastructure, albeit slowly, have greatly contributed to improved growth in some central and eastern parts. Improved technology and modern farming methods helped, analysts said. Over 2005-06 to 2010-2011, the compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of agricultural GDP in Bihar was 4.4 per cent, almost a percentage point more than the national average of 3.3 per cent during the period. The CAGR of agricultural output in Jharkhand was 8.7 per cent during this time. In MP, the CAGR was 3.7 per cent. Punjab, the traditional grain bowl of India, witnessed a CAGR rise in agriculture of 2.4 per cent between 2005-06 and 2009-10, data from the Central Statistical Organisation showed. In Uttar Pradesh, the CAGR was 2.9 per cent during the period. Experts said a combination of good prices and some improvement in agri infrastructure, mainly irrigation, made this change possible. For instance, the Chhattisgarh government announced a special bonus on paddy procurement twice. The first was in 2008, when any farmer selling paddy to state-run cooperatives was
given a bonus of Rs 270 per quintal above the minimum support price fixed by the central government. The second bonus, of Rs 50 per qtl, was announced in April 2011. (Business Standard 17/7/12)

**Inflation not benefiting farmers but forcing them to commit suicide: BJP (20)**

Lucknow/Varanasi, The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday lashed out at Union Steel Minister Beni Prasad Verma for saying that farmers are benefiting from inflation. Verma's statement comes just days after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stressed on the need to curb food inflation which continues to rise by over 10 percent annually. Senior BJP leaders slammed Verma, saying that rather than profiting from the rising prices of food products, farmers in the country were being forced to commit suicide as they faced the brunt of inflation and were reeling under heavy debt. In Lucknow, senior BJP leader Kalraj Mishra said farmers were failing to make profit after selling their produce in the market and were unable to repay the bank loans. "In reality farmers are suffering under the burden of inflation. He is spending more on production. However, the produce is sold at a less price and is not in accordance with the investment made by the farmer. Either it is pulses, wheat or rice, the farmer is forced to sell these products at a less price. In turn the farmer is forced to take loan so that he can undertake agricultural production and sells it at below par rates. He fails to pay the interest for the loan and is then forced to commit suicide," said Mishra. In Varanasi, another senior BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi also echoed Mishra's views and said that he was yet to meet a farmer who has benefited from inflation, but he has seen many who were dying because of the heavy economic burden caused due to inflation. "My reaction to this statement is that maybe Beni Prasad Verma is not aware of the fact that farmers are the biggest losers due to rise in prices. Prices of fertilizers have risen, prices of electricity have increased, prices of water, seeds, sacks, labour has increased, cycles have become costlier, price of diesel has increased and I have never come across a farmer who has benefited from this price rise. Although I have seen farmers committing suicide due to the inflation," said Joshi. Inflation dropped to 6.87 percent in July from 7.25 percent in June as domestic gasoline and vegetable prices fell in July. But global oil prices have been rising since then and in some parts of India is threatening fresh inflationary pressures. Poor rains have slowed the speed of planting Kharif crops such as rice, cereals, pulses and oilseeds including soybean, but areas under sugar cane and cotton, primarily grown in irrigated regions, have been higher than the previous year. More than half of the arable land in India, one of the world's biggest producers of cotton, rice, sugar and wheat, is rain-fed. A successful monsoon means rural residents have more money to spend on everything from motorcycles to refrigerators. (ANI) (New Kerala 20/8/12)

**10 Guj farmers commit suicide in drought-hit region (20)**

Ahmedabad: Drought in Gujarat has started taking its toll as 10 farmers in Saurashtra region, which is the worst hit areas in the state, have committed suicide in last one month because their crops failed in the absence of rain. Saurashtra consists of seven districts which have received only 25% of the season's average rainfall this year. Those who committed suicides are: Koli Devchand, Sgar Mohanbhai, Hamirbhai Kavad and Babu Pagdhal from Amreli district, Kishor Pethani, Bhikhabhai Sakaria, Valabhai Modh and Jaipalsinh Jadeja from Rajkot district, Nikhil Ramolia from Jamnagar district and Keshav Vadher from Junagadh district. “Farmers in Saurashtra have two problems: their crops have largely failed and secondly there are terribly short of fodder to support their animals. Despite our constant demand, this shameless government is not doing anything to ease the situation which has gone from bad to worse,” Gujarat leader of opposition and MLA from Bhavnagar Shaktisinh Gohil said, lashing out at the Modi administration. Even a BJP MP from Saurashtra is blaming the state government authorities of neglecting the farmers. “One month back, it became clear that drought was imminent in the region but unfortunately the government seems least bothered about the issue,” he said, adding that drinking water problem is already worsening in interior and far flung rural areas in the region. In Saurashtra, there are total 135 reservoirs having capacity to store 2512 million cubic metre (MCM) of water. However, due to scanty rainfall in the season, these reservoirs are filled with only 7% of their capacity, which means water crisis is already looming in the region. “Among all the regions in the state, Saurashtra, largest geographical region in the state, is the worst hit because the crops have already failed; fodder is not available and drinking water. Unless and until some drastic and immediate steps are not taken, there will be huge migration of people from rural to urban centres,” a senior secretary in the state government said. (Hindustan Times 22/8/12)

**152 farmer suicides this year: Sharad Pawar (20)**
New Delhi: Suicide by farmers due to agrarian reasons have dropped significantly to 152 in the current year, Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar said on Friday. A total of 14,027 farmers in the country had ended their life in 2011, he said in a written reply to Rajya Sabha. The worst affected states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have seen a fall in farmer suicides this year, he said. The minister said the government has taken several steps to revitalise agriculture sector and improve condition of farmers on sustainable basis by increasing investment, improving farm practices, rural infrastructure and delivery of credit, technology and other inputs, extension marketing, marketing etc., under various schemes. Maharashtra registered 118 cases of farmer suicide till August 8 this year, while Andhra Pradesh witnessed 33 such cases till July 25 and there was only one such incident in Karnataka (till July 10), Pawar added. The number for the same in 2011 was 485, 193 and 67 for Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, respectively. Pawar said reasons for farmer suicide as reported by state governments included indebtedness, crop failure, drought, socio-economic and personal reasons. The government is focusing on expansion of farm income, creation of non-farm income opportunities, improvement in productivity of rainfed agriculture, increasing coverage of farming areas under protective irrigation and forging appropriate backward and forward linkages. Investment in agriculture & allied activities by public and private sectors at current price has increased from Rs 1,81,562 crore in 2009-10 to Rs 2,11,565 crore in 2010-11. Total plan outlay for Department of Agriculture has been increased from Rs 17,123 crore in 2011-12 to Rs 2,0208 crore in 2012-13, Pawar said. (Zee News 24/8/12)

Badal seeks Rs 1,000 crore Central aid for agriculture (20)
New Delhi: Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Saturday urged Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar to sanction a financial assistance of Rs 1,000 crores to the State for creating necessary infrastructure to develop technology for production of alternate crops and their post harvest handling towards a major push for diversification of agriculture. The CM apprised Pawar that diversification of the agriculture was the need of the hour to bail out the beleaguered peasantry of the state from the conventional wheat-paddy rotation besides motivating them to go for other alternate crops by ensuring remunerative returns to them. He said that the institutional and infrastructural support provided to the state would go a long way towards a paradigm shift from paddy to alternate crops. Badal also asked the Agriculture Minister to ensure that a remunerative Minimum Support Price for alternate crops may be announced well in advance of the sowing season and an efficient procurement mechanism should be assured for the marketing of these crops, through a designated agency of the Government of India, as in case of wheat and paddy, so that proper marketing of these crops could be guaranteed. He said that these initiatives would help the state to diversify away from rice in wake of its increasing production in the Eastern States including Eastern U.P., Bihar, Odisa, West Bengal, Assam and Madhya Pradesh during the last three years. He further said that being an irrigated area, a large number of crops could be successfully cultivated in Punjab, which could easily replace paddy and help in conservation of natural resource base for agriculture i.e. soil and water in the State. Badal also sought immediate release of relief package of Rs 5,112 crore to bail the Punjab farmers out of the crisis following the drought like condition due to deficit rains in the region. Responding to the demands put forth by Badal, Pawar assured him that Centre would extend all possible help and support to the state in this hour of crisis. On the issue of diversification of agriculture the Union Minister assured the CM that the GoI would help Punjab financially for diversifying to alternate crops. (Pioneer 26/8/12)

Chhattisgarh eliminates farmer suicides by fudging death data (20)
RAIPUR: The sky is overcast, the fields lush with paddy. A good harvest beckons and to complete the picture of a rural idyll, Chhattisgarh has posted ‘zero’ farmer suicides for 2011. For a state that has consistently reported the highest rate of farmer suicides in India, with 1,773 cases in 2008; 1,802 in 2009; and 1,126 in 2010, eliminating farmer suicides would be a thundering achievement. But a ground investigation shows this may be nothing more than a statistical feat. Half an hour's drive from Raipur, in Abhanpur, the annual police report, seen by TOI, records 12 cases of farmer suicides in 2011. This report was sent to the police headquarters in Raipur, but as the state-wide compilation submitted to the National Crime Records Bureau shows, the data was lost in transit. The additional director-general of police, Ram Niwas, says, “We found constables in police stations were making mistakes in entering data. Even traders and businessmen were shown as farmers. So we have corrected the mistakes in the headquarters.” An analysis by right-to-food activist Manas Ranjan shows while suicides listed under ‘self-employed (farming/agriculture)’ have been falling, those under ‘self-employed (other)’ and ‘other’ have
been rising, indicating farmer suicides are being concealed in categories that are less noticeable and politically sensitive... (Times of India 27/8/12)

**DNA special: Erratic monsoon causes spike in farmer suicides (20)**

Mumbai: The erratic monsoon has led to pest attacks and fungal infestation on as much as 50% of the cotton, soya and paddy crop, aggravating Vidarbha's agrarian crisis. A fallout of this is a rise in farmer suicides, including five in the last 72 hours, taking the toll to 50 deaths in August alone and 526 in 2012 so far. Mounting debt, fear of crop failure and volatile market prices of produce are being cited as the reasons for the suicides of Manikrao Kukade, 65, Vithal Bhongare, 55, Shyam Sahare, 53, Daulat Kakde, 60, and Chakradhar Choudhary, 32. Expressing concern over the delay in providing relief to the farmers, Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti chief Kishore Tiwari said, “The Rs2,275 crore in aid that the state government is demanding is for completion of 105 irrigation projects — 35 in Vidarbha, 40 in Marathwada, and 30 in the rest of Maharashtra — by July 2013. ‘Drought relief’ seems like a clever ploy to get funding for projects that have come under the scanner due to cost escalations and irregularities in land acquisition.” According to him, the state government has formulated drought relief measures without assessing ground realities. “The entire process seems ad-hoc, and norms for selection of affected blocks in the 123 talukas that the government has decided on seem to have been done on the whim of certain vested interests in the ruling Congress-NCP combine.” The Union cabinet had earlier expressed its inability to take a call on both the demand of premature drought assessment sought by state government, as well as the Rs580 crore it wants for construction of cement check dams. The latter, interestingly, is not even covered under the National Drought Relief Fund. Many agronomists feel the state government’s priority should be core issues like credit, the ground water crisis, and minimum support price for main cash crops of cotton, soya and sugarcane. “If we do not raise our voices in time, it is very likely that the politicians will siphon off thousands of crores in the name of relief packages by floating relief intervention strategies which suit their own convenience. It seems tough to believe that they will do this when farmers are dying in such large numbers. But past experience shows us that their corruption does not know niceties like sensitivity,” lamented Tiwari. (DNA 2/9/12)

**7 farmers end life in 3 days in Vidarbha (20)**

NAGPUR: Seven farmers have committed suicide in the past 72 hours in the Vidarbha region with two cases reported on Monday, according to the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a social group working among farmers. Dhayneshwer Thakary of Nilapur village in Yavatmal district and Pramod Mamankar of Yevada village in Amravati killed themselves on Monday. The others are Manikrao Kukade of Ranegaon village and Vithal Bhogare of Eranda in Akola district, Shyam Sahare of Ziroba in Bhandara district, Daulat Kukade of Agra in Nagpur and Chakradhar Choudhary of Mansawali in Wardha, says the VJAS. According to documentation done by the Samiti, a total of 528 farmers took their own lives in Vidarbha between January 1 and September 2 this year. Its president Kishor Tiwari said heavy rain in the region damaged cash crops soya, paddy and cotton, reflecting in the growing suicides. Keywords: Vidarbha farmers suicide, Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti, VJAS, Nilapur village, Yavatmal district, Yevada village, Amravati (The Hindu 4/9/12)

**CAU training programme notes farmers’ plight (20)**

Imphal, September 04 2012: A two-day training programme on 'Contingency Planning and Strategic Management during extreme Weather Situation' has commenced from today at the Mini Auditorium of College of Agriculture, Central Agricultural University. Inaugural session of the training programme organised by Directorate of Extension Education, CAU was held with Dean of College of Agriculture Dr N Iboton Singh, Director of Extension Education Dr M Premjit Singh and Director of Research, CAU Dr M Rohinikumar Singh as the chief guest, president and guest of honour respectively. In his address as the chief guest, Dr Iboton stated that with steady rise in temperature the only constant change being witnessed throughout the world for the past many years the ongoing trend is posing great challenge to agricultural workers as quantum of seasonal rainfall could no longer be predicted. To be prepared for any eventuality by the agricultural workers consequent to decline or excess in the rainfall infrastructure to harvest rain-water needs to be developed with great urgency, suggested the chief guest. Maintaining that for sustaining agricultural activities in a successful manner, especially in Manipur where crops depend heavily on rainfall, there should be effective and long-term planning, he prevailed upon the State authorities to develop a viable irrigation system to overcome problem of rain-water deficiency. Referring to
various rivers running through the valley pockets as natural sources of water to facilitate development of river lift irrigation projects, Dr Iboton also called upon the agricultural scientists to develop food crops which could be grown with minimal water. With regard to present situation of rainfall shortage hampering plantation of paddy crop at different parts of the State, he suggested cultivation of alternative crops through consultation with subject experts. Speaking at the occasion, Dr M Premjit said that participants of the training programme should strive to translate in action knowledge gained from resource persons. As resource persons on the opening day of the training programme, Dr L Nabachandra elaborated on ‘Weather aberration in rainfed agriculture issues and strategies’, Dr RK Tombisana on ‘Management of problematic crop diseases during drought/flood-like situation’, Dr Edwin Luikham on ‘Management of rice under delayed planting and moisture stress’ and Dr A Herojit on ‘Nutrient management in rice under abnormal planting during drought/flood-like situation’. (Manipur: E. Pao 5/9/12)

Project meant for Vidarbha farmers, clarifies Vijay Darda (20)
Nagpur: The Congress Rajya Sabha MP and the owner of the Lokmat group of publications Vijay Darda said on Wednesday that the JLD limited project was meant for the farmers in the suicide prone Vidarbha region. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) had named Mr. Vijay Darda, his brother and Maharashtra Education Minister Rajendra Darda and Devendra Darda in the FIR filled on Tuesday in its investigation in the coal blocks allocation. Mr. Vijay Darda issued a clarification today through Marathi daily Lokmat which is owned by him. “In 2006, I decided to put up a 1215 megawatt plant near Wani. I wanted to provide cheap electricity to the poor farmers of Yavatmal district. The JLD limited had requested for a coal block within 60 km from the site of the project but we were given the coal block 600 km away. The project became financially unviable so I dissociated myself from the project in 2009” said Mr. Darda. “As a Member of Parliament, I never misused my position to influence the coal block allocation. I refute all the allegations that are levelled against me. We are not involved in any wrongdoings and very soon the truth will come out in open. I will fully cooperate with the CBI in the investigations” he added. The CBI had raided many places on Tuesday including Mr. Vijay Darda’s home in Nagpur. But CBI officials remained tight-lipped about the raids. “The team which carried out the raids, came from New Delhi and hardly anyone from Nagpur CBI office participated in the raids” Thomas John, a CBI officer in Nagpur told The Hindu. “Only one API from Nagpur went with the team to guide it. The team was headed by Officer Vivek Datta” he added. (The Hindu 5/9/12)

Four more farmers commit suicide in Vidarbha (20)
Yavatmal (Maharashtra): Even as Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar was attending a massive ‘Janata Darbar’ (public hearing) in Yavatmal town of Vidarbha region, four debt-ridden farmers committed suicide, an activist said here Saturday. “While Pawar was attending this event in Yavatmal, as a part of a political campaign Friday, news of four more debt-trapped and distressed farmers who lost their standing crop due heavy rains this season spread in the town,” said Kishor Tiwari, president of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a farmers' advocacy group. The farmers have been identified as Pundlik Uke of Salebhati, Dipal Vajpayee of In Phulsawangi, Atul Kute of Tirzada and Sitaran Rathode of Sewadas Nagar, all villages of Yavatmal district. "This takes the tally of farmers' suicides in Vidarbha to 536 in 2012 alone," Tiwari said. "As per official government records, more than 9,000 dry land farmers have killed themselves due to distress and despair owing to crop failure and economic losses since 2005," Tiwari said. Tiwari also alleged that a rosy picture is being painted by the local politicians and the Maharashtra Chief Minister is being kept in the dark about the severely bad condition of farmers in the region. "More than three million distressed farmers are denied food security, health services and alternate sustainable sources of livelihood, forcing them to kill themselves. The chief minister is being kept in the dark by the administration by giving a rosy picture of Vidarbha, which is the main cause of worry," Tiwari lamented. (IANS) (New Kerala 8/9/12)

Implement Swaminathan report, says Kisan Sabha (20)
PALAKKAD: All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) general secretary Atul Kumar Anjan has urged the Union government to “ensure remunerative price for agriculture products to end the ever-increasing suicide of farmers in the country.” Inaugurating a public meeting organised to mark the end of the three-day State conference of the Kisan Sabha at Fort Maidan here on Monday, Mr. Anjan said the agriculture sector in the country is facing crisis because farming has become a losing vocation. Owing to high cost of production and low income the farmers are leaving agriculture. As they are not able to pay back the loan
they had taken, they are forced to commit suicide. This has become the biggest tragedy in the modern India where more than six lakh farmers committed suicide during the last one decade. The suicides are on the increase in many parts of the country as the Central and State governments failed to take steps to help the farmers.” He said that if the Centre had implemented the M.S. Swaminathan Commission report, the crisis in the agriculture sector would have been solved. “But the Congress-led government at the Centre is sitting on the report for the last couple of years.” Mr. Anjan demanded pension for all farmers who had crossed 60 years of age. The farmers should also be given crop insurance and compensation for crop loss. He said the United Progressive Alliance government at the Centre and the various State governments, including those of the BJP, were indulging in scams. The Left parties, despite being in power for long in West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura, were not corrupt and had taken steps to help the farmers and other sections of the people, he claimed. V. Chamunni, president of the Kisan Sabha State unit, presided of the meeting. (The Hindu 11/9/12)

Farmers suicides: Govt asks for follow-up study (20)
Hyderabad, Sept. 12: The Andhra Pradesh Government has asked the SERP (Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty) to conduct a study on the socio-economic conditions of the kin of farmers who committed suicide in the last seven years. “You need to study whether they have received the Rs 1.5 lakh compensation they supposed to get. “The other aspects the study could cover are to see whether the children in those families are getting their fee reimbursed, whether the kin are getting pension,” Revenue Minister N. Raghuveera Reddy said. In a review meeting held here on Tuesday, he said the Ministry would hold a meeting of Joint Collectors on September 25 and 26 to take stock of implementation of various schemes. Keeping in view the controversies over mining deals, the Minister has asked the officials to send a team to study the applications and visit the area in question before preparing a detailed report. He also asked the officials to finalise the list of beneficiaries of the sixth phase of land distribution by September 25. “In order to encourage wind power, we need to give land on lease at a nominal rent,” he told the officials. (Business Line 12/9/12)

Interest on crop loans waived for Gujarat farmers (20)
Unai (Gujarat), Sept 13: Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday announced a slew of sops for farmers facing hardship due to crop failure in the wake of drought-like conditions in the poll-bound State. “It has been decided that interest on the crop loans taken by farmers, hit by the drought-like conditions, shall be borne by the State Government, which would be around Rs 300 crore,” Modi told newsmen on the sidelines of his Vivekananda Yuva Vikas Yatra. “The Government has also decided to give 50 per cent relief in the electricity bills of such farmers,” he said. “It’s also the responsibility of the State Government to be concerned about farmers who are facing hardships, on account of drought-like situation prevailing in Gujarat, earlier,” he said. The monsoon arrival in this part of Western Coast was somewhat delayed this year. It touched Gujarat coast around June 17, but remained static for a long time, leading to drought-like conditions in many parts of the State. Regions of Kutch and Saurashtra were the worst hit with over 70 per cent deficient rainfall reported, in first spell of monsoon. However, the situation has changed somewhat in the last fortnight with rains lashing the State. Hit by crop failure, several farmers, mainly from Saurashtra region, had committed suicide. Opposition Congress has made farmers suicide a major issue ahead of the polls in Gujarat, accusing the ruling BJP Government of inaction. (Business Line 13/9/12)

State gets notice on farmer suicides (20)
New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission on Wednesday issued a notice to the Maharashtra government on the alleged suicide of seven farmers in 72 hours in the Vidarbha region. Taking cognisance of the matter, the Commission has asked the chief secretary of the state to respond to its notice within six weeks. The Commission observed that the farmers, Dnyaneshwar Thakry, Pramod Mamankar, Kani-krao Kukade, Vitthal Bho-gare, Shyam Sahare, Doulat Kukade and Chak-radar Choudhary, all of who hailed from the Vidarbha region, committed suicide in a span of 72 hours early this month. “If true, (the matter) raised a serious issue of violation of human rights of farmers,” the Comm-ission noted. Citing media reports, a senior NHRC official said that the cause of the reported suicides was the damage to the cash crops like soya, paddy and cotton, which occurred due to heavy rain in the region. “As per documentation done by Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), 528 farmers had committed suicide in the Vidarbha region between January 1 and September 2 this year,” the official
Failed crop sowed seeds of 37 farmer suicides in Gujarat (20)
Ahmedabad: Our own Saurashtra is galloping the Vidarbha way by becoming home to large number of farmer deaths from suicide this year, all due to crop failure. The region has been already witnessed 37 suicides by farmers till September this year alone, which is highest since 2000. While, of them 15 chose to end their lives due to crop failure, three succumbed to increasing debts; the non-availability of fodder for their live stocks claimed the remaining, reveals a confidential report prepared by the state government. The figures, however, also reveal that 19 farmers in the state have killed themselves for reasons other than their farms. A government official posted in Gandhinagar, on condition of anonymity told DNA, that primarily it has been revealed that many farmers ended their lives due to non-availability of low cost fodder for their live stocks. The scene was even worse in 2011; data revealed by the National Crime Record Bureau (BCRB) claims that Gujarat ranked ninth in the country in case of the numbers of deaths relating to farming and agriculture. “Gujarat is no different from other states. Farmers kill themselves due to the failure of state government. Exact numbers of the farmer deaths is even more,” said president of Bhartiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), Magan Patel talking to DNA. If the activists working for farmer issues are to be believed, it will not be an exaggeration to say that today’s Vidarbha can be tomorrow’s Gujarat, where farmers’ suicides will be a routine matter. The numbers of farmer suicide in Gujarat saw a steep rise from 523 in 2010 to 578 in 2011. Talking to DNA on phone from Vidarbha, Vijay Javandiya, farmer rights activist and national convener of Shetkari Sangathan said that the situation in Maharashtra is worse, but Gujarat’s situation is not good either. “Condition of farmers is bad even in Gujarat, but unlike Vidarbha there are employment opportunities in diamond polishing units, textile mills etc for the farmers in Gujarat. So, numbers of farmer deaths are comparatively less, but the situation is same in both the states, Javandiya said. According to BKS, only 40% of Agriculture land in Gujarat is irrigated, while the percentage is 92% in Punjab and 83% in Uttar Pradesh. “Gujarat still stands far behind compared to these states,” Patel said. Talking to DNA on phone from Vidarbha, Vijay Javandiya, farmer rights activist and national convener, Shetkari Sangathan, said that the situation in Maharashtra is worst but the situation in Gujarat is not good either. He said, “Condition of farmers is bad even in Gujarat but unlike Vidarbha there are employment opportunities in diamond polishing units, textile mills etc for the farmers in Gujarat. So, numbers of farmer’s deaths are comparatively less, but the situation is same in both the states, he said. According to BKS, only 40% of Agriculture land in Gujarat is irrigated, while the percentage is 92% in Punjab and 83% in Uttar Pradesh. “Gujarat still stands far behind compared to these states,” Patel said. (DNA 14/7/12)

2 more farmers commit suicide over crop failure (20)
RAJKOT: Crop failure has forced two more farmers to commit suicide in the past 48 hours in Saurashtra. This has taken the toll of farmer suicide in the region to 22 this monsoon, sources said. Dolubha Padhiyar, 50, a resident of Dudhivadar village in Jamkandorna taluka in Rajkot district, consumed poison on Monday after his crop failed. Dolubha had sown 'juvar' in his 35 bigha farm near Fofal river dam. However, water from upstream area of the dam flooded the farm and the crop failed. Dolubha had not been able to cultivate any other crop due to a delayed monsoon and had sown juvar for his cattle. He was anxious over the ever increasing debt and took the extreme step of killing himself, sources said. The second case concerned 28-year-old Devarakhi Ahir, a resident of Khakhijaliya village in Upleta taluka of Rajkot district. He had consumed some poisonous substance on Tuesday. The deceased's family members, who also work as farm workers, told police that Devarakhi owned only six bigha land and had seven children to feed. Ever since his crop failed, he had been asking villagers whether he was eligible for crop insurance. He could not take the pressure of crop failure any longer and finally killed himself. The region in the past 20 days has received good rainfall. However, sources say this has not been of much help for the farmers, who continue to end their lives because of financial stress. The latest rainfall can only be useful for growing fodder for their cattle. Crops have already failed because of a delayed monsoon. (Times of India 18/9/12)

Cotton farmers protest against FDI in retail (20)
Vidarbha: A section of cotton growers in Eastern Maharashtra’s Vidarbha region joined the protest against the government’s reform of allowing 51% foreign direct investment (FDI) in multi-brand retail. Their protest was organized by Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS) in two villages, Hiwara and Moha. Farmers who
were part of the protests alleged that thousands of farmers had already committed suicides in the cotton growing region of Vidarbha due to the state's pro-multinational policies in agriculture. VJAS leader, Kishore Tiwari said the latest reforms proposed by the Indian Government such as allowing 51 percent FDI in multi-brand retail sector, along with the hike in diesel prices and subsidy cuts, would pave the way for MNCs to control the agrarian economy. "We want national debate over FDI in retail. Mounting debt is already a huge problem for farmers here. Vidarbha is a perfect example that shows how allowing foreign investments in agriculture inputs allows MNCs to build monopolies, giving rise to unfair trade practices like cartelization," he said. Tiwari alleged that over 9,000 farmers have committed suicide since 2005, when an American seed corporation that produced genetically modified Bt cotton seeds was allowed to do business in Vidarbha. Following continuous and strong opposition, the Maharashtra government ultimately agreed to ban Bt cotton in the region, but the decision came after several farmers lost their lives. (Times of India 20/9/12)

**Dharwad gears up to host global agriculture meet (20)**

DHARWAD: The stage has been set for the four-day Krishi Mela-2012 and international agriculture meet at the University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS) in Dharwad. The UAS in association with the department of Agriculture, Horticulture is hosting the event from September 22 to 25. Nearly 10 lakh farmers, extension personnel and members of self help groups are expected to participate in the mela. There will be demonstrations on various topics, including integrated farming system for sustainable livelihood and exhibitions. UAS vice-chancellor R R Hanchinal on Thursday said agricultural technology for drought management is the theme for this year's event. Eminent scientists, researchers and progressive farmers will discuss at length with the farmers on new technologies available in the market for taking up hassle-free cultivation, he added. While the seed fair will be the highlight on the opening day, Sunday will see chief minister Jagdish Shettar formally inaugurating the mela and honouring outstanding farmers from north Karnataka with the Best Farmer awards. On Monday, the focus will be on organic farming. The concluding day will feature deliberations on integrated farming. Canada University chancellor Bernard will inaugurate the seed mela and the university will be holding a seed exhibition-cum-sale. The department plans to sell more than 1.5 lakh quintal of various seeds for rabi sowing. The sprawling UAS campus will have 450 stalls which will showcase farm equipment. There will be discussion on integrated farming system approach to empower farm households, dry land technologies for enhancement of agricultural productivity, watershed development, rainwater harvesting for groundwater recharge, organic farming systems and biotechnology, nutrient management, bio-fertilizers and soil health care, sale of improved varieties of seeds, plants and publications, seed production, storage and marketing and improved agricultural technologies and farm% machineries. (Times of India 22/9/12)

**1.37L Yavatmal farmers get loan interest relief (20)**

Yavatmal: Over 1.37 lakh farmers across Yavatmal district have garnered the benefits to the tune of Rs 12.18 crore under the Government-sponsored Panjabrao Deshmukh Interest Concession Scheme (PDICS). According to Lakshmansingh Katare, District Deputy Registrar (DDR) of Co-Operative Societies, the Government introduced the popular interest concession scheme in 2009-10 for the agriculturists of this district in Vidarbha region. The scheme envisages interest relief to the farmers availing short-term crop loan if they paid installments within a pre-determined time frame. During the last three years, 1,37,697 farmers availed the benefits of this scheme. They have been given interest relief to the tune of Rs 12.18 crore, he said. Under the scheme, the farmers who obtain loan up to Rs 1 lakh and pay back the amount within a prescribed time limit (up to June 30 every year), they get 3 per cent interest concession. Those farmers who obtain loan ranging from Rs 1-3 lakh and pay back the loan in time, are given 2 per cent concession on their annual loan interest. (Indian Express 23/9/12)

**Textile and farm activists narrate woes to Kelkar committee (20)**

NAGPUR: The agriculture subcommittee under the Kelkar Committee, which is looking into the causes of regional imbalances in the state, held discussions and hearings in the city on Tuesday and Wednesday. The committee tried to identify the causes of the ongoing agrarian crisis in the region and reasons for industrial backwardness. The committee visited the city's oldest orange processing industry, Naga (Nagpur Orange Growers Association), held discussion with stakeholders in the cotton textile industry and a brainstorming on farmers' suicides. The subcommittee is headed by VM Mayande, the convener, and comprises Vijayanna Borade, the president of the Marathwada Sheti Sahay Mandal, and Vinayak
Deshpande, the head of business management from Nagpur University. Shahji Narwade from the School of Rural Development of Tata Institute of Social Sciences in Tuljapur and some agriculture experts participated in the discussions. Representatives of the spinning industries voiced their concern over the ambiguous textile policy of the state. Linking of the policy to central government has created a lot of problems, they claimed. They pointed out that since the central government has withdrawn the facility of technology upgradation funds about a fortnight back the textile related industries cannot get a UID until announcement of next five year plan. This will prevent the industry from developing in the region and encourage their migration to other states. Vidarbha rainfed desi cotton varieties, though of short staple length, have very good absorbent capacity and are in good demand in other countries. Institutes demanded that cultivation of these varieties be promoted in region. Farmers’ sympathizers pointed out that at present sugarcane, grown in 5% of area takes up 95% of water and crops grown in 95% area get 5% water. It was pointed out that imbalance in use of natural resources like water and minerals also cause regional imbalances… (Times of India 27/9/12)

Farmers on 25-hour picketing of village offices (20)
KASARAGOD: Accusing the Union government of pursuing “anti-people and anti-farmer polices that are bound to drive cultivators to the brink of suicide,” pro-Left ‘Kerala Karshaka Sangam has begun its 25-hour picketing of village offices and agriculture offices in 44 centres across the district. The protestors said the programme was being organised to save the farmers and the farm-centred economy of the State from imminent collapse. C.H. Kunhambu, former MLA, inaugurated the picketing held at the Kasaragod village office. Similar demonstrations were held in front of the village offices of Chengala, Madhur, Badoor, Perla, Badiaduka, Kumbla, Bambrana, Chithari, Periya, Baara, Panayal, Munnad, Bovikanam, Mullaria, Adoor, Kininjar, Kunjathur, Miyapadavu, Paivalige, Mangalpadi, Nayabazar, Trikkarippur, Pliccode, and agriculture offices at Mograi-Puthur, Madikka, and Kuttikole. The protests by farmers comes two days after CITU activists, protesting against the “anti-people” policies pursued by the Centre and the State, picketed district Collectorates across the State. (The Hindu 29/9/12)

Seven more farmers commit suicide in Vidarbha (20)
Nagpur: Seven more farmers have committed suicide in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra in last four days, according to the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS), a social group working among farmers in Vidarbha. Baliram Wagh and Shivaji Wagh of Pokhari village, Ramesh Kharat of Girol village and Prakash Jadhav of Koregoon village in Buldhana district, Sunil Choudhari of Karanja tehsil in Washim district, Yashwant Chavhan of Sultanpur village in Amravati district and Shankar Mudalkar of Yari village in Yavatmal district have reportedly committed suicide in last four days, according to press statement issued by the VJAS. Out of these seven farmers Baliram Wagh and Shivaji Wagh is a father-son duo. Both of them hanged themselves within a span of two hours, according to some reports. Baliram committed suicide at around 10 am on Saturday. When his father Shivaji was informed about his son’s death he killed himself at his farm. According Mr.Kishor Tiwari, the president of the VJAS, these farmers killed themselves after a massive pest attack ruined their crops. “With these seven deaths, the toll of farmer’s suicide in Vidarbha has reached 59 for the month of September. As many as 565 farmers have killed themselves in the region because of the agrarian crisis since January this year” added Mr.Tiwari. (The Hindu 30/9/12)

Farmers begin relay, hunger strike over Cauvery water release (20)
Mandya (Kar): A farmers’ body spearheading the stir against release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu began a relay hunger strike here in protest against Karnataka’s action and warned that people would stop paying taxes if government did not heed their demand to stop the flow by this evening. "We have set a deadline to the government... if the water release is not stopped by this evening, people will resort to a civil disobedience movement by not paying taxes," Cauvery Hitarakshana Samithi President G Madegowda told reporters. Karnataka has been releasing 9,000 cusecs since Sunday, in compliance with a Supreme Court directive. Gowda, a former MP, said he has decided not to go on an indefinite fast on a plea by former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda. Raitha Sangha (Farmers Association) leaders said they would lay seige to Raj Bhavan today in Bangalore, demanding intervention of Governor H R Bharadwaj on the Cauvery water issue and to safeguard the state's interest. Meanwhile, opposition Congress leader in the assembly Siddaramaiah commenced a padayatra from Mysore to Mandya to express solidarity with the agitating farmers. Authorities at Krishna Raja Sagar reservoir stepped up security in the wake of
escalated protests when thousands of farmers tried to lay siege to the dam and also the Kabini reservoir yesterday, demanding closure of crest gates to stop the flow. District authorities had deployed Rapid Action Force at the KRS dam. Chief Minister Jagadish Shettar had urged farmers to maintain peace and said the state would file a review petition before the Supreme Court, praying for a review of the Cauvery River Authority directive. The Karnataka government began releasing water after the Supreme Court asked it to abide by the September 19 directive of the Cauvery River Authority, headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh till October 15. Shettar urged Madegowda not to undertake the fast and assured him that government is committed to protect the interests of farmers. He told reporters that government would move the Supreme Court today, seeking a direction to CRA to review its September 19 order. The Cauvery Hitarakshana Samithi has been critical of Shettar, alleging that he had reneged on his promise of not releasing water under any circumstances. External Affairs Minister S M Krishna, who is from Mandy district, had a telephonic talk from abroad with District Congress President M S Atmananda and asked him to prevail on Madegowda to give up his plan to undertake a relay fast. Atmananda said Krishna told him he would call on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his return and apprise him of the difficult situation faced by Karnataka due to drought. In Bangalore, former Chief Minister and JDS state unit president H D Kumaraswamy urged people to reject BJP and Congress to enable the state get justice from the Centre over this issue. "Karnataka has been facing injustice on the Cauvery water sharing issue from time immemorial," he told reporters. (Deccan Herald 4/10/12)

Bank forces small farmers into fixed deposit trap (20)
Midnapore: Farmers in Daspur village of West Midnapore had grudgingly accepted the "extortion" till Sayera Bibi put her foot down. The middle-aged woman walked out of the local Punjab National Bank branch refusing to take Kishan Credit at the bank's whims. Her grouse has reached up to the level of chief minister Mamata Banerjee who had urged all the farmers to apply for the Kishan Credit Card during her district tour. "The bank officer told me to withdraw the sanctioned Rs 50,000 loan on condition that I keep Rs 14,000 in fixed deposit and buy an life insurance policy of Rs 6,000. How should I keep such a huge amount in the bank?" said Sayera Bibi after refusing to withdraw the sanctioned amount from PNB branch at Gour Gobindanagar under Daspur-Nandanpur gram panchayat I. Within days of her refusing the money on September 29, as many as 45 farmers in two groups - one 30 and another 15 - made a formal complaint to the West Midnapore district magistrate and also wrote to Mamata Banerjee. The Kishan Credit Scheme, however, does not have any such stipulation. A look at the policy makes it clear that the Centre wants banks to limit short term cash credit should be fixed based on the cropping pattern and the amounts for crop production, repairs and maintenance of farm assets and consumption. Banks sanction the loan after proper inquiry of the land assets of the loan applicant. However, the policy allows banks to take suitable collateral as per their policy "where the card limit/liability so arrived warrants additional security". But this clause doesn't apply for a flexible loan (Flexi KCC) between Rs 10,000 and Rs 50,000 meant for marginal farmers. Sayera is not alone. Her neighbour Israful Sheikh bought an insurance policy of Rs 20,000 from the sanctioned bank loan and went home with the remaining Rs 30,000. "What do I do? I have no choice. The sum doesn't suffice to take care of the rising input costs, including diesel for running pumps," Sheikh said. So did Imran Ali and Anabul Hossain. Imran bought an insurance for Rs 18,000, while Anabul was asked to buy a Rs 20,000 insurance policy, possibly as collateral. Prodded by West Midnapore district magistrate, district manager of the lead bank (UBI) Samarendra Sannigrahi held a district-level meeting on Thursday to take stock of the progress of kishan credit cards and the problems farmers are facing. Sayera's complaint came up in the meet following which Sannigrahi has sought an explanation from the particular PNB branch. Additional district magistrate (development), Arindam Datta, held that banks can't force farmers to keep a part of the loan amount in fixed deposits or other schemes. "The bank can't take back the money sanctioned for the individual farmer," Datta said. PNB Midnapore circle head Virendra Kumar Kaushik said: "We will take up the complaints with Manas Pathak, the business facilitator at the bank branch." (Times of India 5/10/12)

Farmer attempts suicide after his eviction from govt land (20)
Berhampur (Odisha): A farmer allegedly tried to commit suicide by consuming poison in protest against his eviction from the government land at Kabisurya Nagar in Ganjam district, police said today. Gantayat Swain (40) of Kabisurya Nagar was admitted to MKCG Medical College and Hospital here as he became seriously ill after consuming the poison yesterday. Swain was evicted from the land belonging to government to hand over to the civic body of Kabisurya Nagar for construction of a Kalyan Mandap.
District collector has ordered to hand over the patch of land to NAC for construction of Kalyan Mandap. We have also asked the occupant to vacate the land and he had agreed," tehsildar, Kabisurya Nagar Bibekananda Sahu, said. He was, however, unaware of the consumption of poison by Swain. "I don't know what happened," the tehsidar said. Swain had allegedly encroached three acres of land and done fencing around it. (Indian Express 7/10/12)

Farmers to be encouraged to take up integrated farming (20)
Bijapur: R.R. Hanchinal, Vice-Chancellor, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, has said the university will select small and marginal farmers in seven districts that come under the varsity, and encourage them to implement integrated farming. Addressing presspersons here on Saturday, Dr. Hanchinal said the university aimed to promote integrated farming and had a comprehensive plan to provide dryland farmers with alternative sources of revenue. He said that owing to persistent drought, mainly in the north Karnataka region, small and marginal farmers were incurring heavy losses because of which they were forced to migrate in search of jobs. "With a two-pronged objective of providing alternative revenue-generating activities, and preventing migration, the university has decided to implement integrated farming in seven districts," he said. It would be implemented on around 2,300 hectares of land. Dr. Hanchinal said that under the programme, farmers would be encouraged to take up dairy and poultry farming and horticulture that would help them earn money even during drought. He said that the programme would be implemented on 40 hectares of land near Raita Samparka Kendras in the seven districts so that farmers could get information at the kendras. He said that the State government had released Rs. 13 crore to the university for the programme. Dr. Hanchinal said the university had taken up research to produce high quality seeds that could germinate with limited water. It was also focussing on promoting organic farming, conserving water and preventing soil erosion. (The Hindu 7/10/12)

Farmers’ suicide a serious issue, but numbers declining: Sharad Pawar (20)
NEW DELHI: Agriculture minister Sharad Pawar on Tuesday termed farmers’ suicide as a serious issue, but said such cases were showing a decline. The government is focusing on increasing investment in agriculture as well as raising minimum support price (MSP) of crops to increase farmers’ income, Pawar told the economic editors conference here. "It is true that this is a serious issue before us. However, the percentage of farmers' suicide is coming down," the minister said replying to a query on farmers suicide. Pawar said there are various reasons for suicides such as loss of crop due to drought, disease and other factors. "Increase in MSP and other steps will help improve the situation of farmers'. The government is focusing more on improving farm investment," he added. In support of his comments on declining number of farmers’ suicide, Pawar said in Maharashtra there were 1,035 cases of farmers suicide due to agrarian reason in 2006. It came down to 800 in 2008, 700 in 2007 and then rose to 740 in 2010 before coming down to 480 in 2011 in the state. "So far this year, the number of farmers suicides cases (in Maharashtra) reported are 168," he added. Similarly, In Andhra Pradesh, the cases related to suicide by farmers stood at 757 in 2006, but declined to 196 in 2011, Pawar added. According to the latest data presented by the government in Parliament during the recently concluded monsoon session, as many as 2,90,740 farmers committed suicide during 1995-2011 due to various reasons, including bankruptcy or sudden change in economic status and poverty. The data has been quoted from the National Crime Records Bureau's (NCRB) latest annual report on suicides, ADSI-2011 (accidental death and suicides in India). As many as 152 farmer suicides were reported till August 2012 as against 14,027 during the entire period of last calender year, as per the latest government data. (Times of India 9/10/12)

Notice to State, Centre on petition seeking MSP for all agricultural crops (20)
Bangalore: The Karnataka High Court on Tuesday ordered issue of notice to the State and Union governments on a public interest litigation (PIL) petition seeking directions for fixing minimum support price (MSP) for all agricultural crops and also for setting up agriculture price commission. A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Vikaramjit and Justice B.V. Nagaratna passed the order on the petition filed by H.T. Huchchappa, a farmer from Hassan. The petitioner pointed out that MSP had been fixed only for turmeric and copra. The petitioner also pointed out that the government spends more than Rs. 6,000 crore a year to irrigate areas under various projects. However, no such financial allocation had been made for dryland areas or rainfed areas he said, and pointed out that the number of farmers in dryland areas was more compared to irrigated areas. Pointing out that Karnataka stood third in the country in terms of number of farmers’ suicide, the petitioner said various short-term and long-term measures,
including fixing of MSP, were essential to protect farmers from committing suicide. The Bench adjourned further hearing to November 5. The Bench gave last opportunity for the State government to take a decision on withdrawing the circular issued to various authorities to hoist red-yellow flag on the Rajyotsava Day (November 1). The government has been saying since April this year that the circular, issued based on the announcement made by the then Chief Minister in the budget earlier this year, would be withdrawn and the Cabinet would soon withdraw its earlier proposal to hoist the flag on November 1 this year. Even on Tuesday, the government counsel submitted that the Cabinet was yet to withdraw it earlier decision. Following this, the Bench said that a decision would have to be taken by October 31. The Bench was hearing a PIL petition complaining about the “misuse” of this flag by Karnataka Rakshana Vedike and other organisations. During earlier hearing, the government had accepted before the court that this flag had not been given the status of “State flag” in view of the National Flag Code. (The Hindu 10/10/12)

FDI in multi-brand retail to help farmers: Sharad Pawar (20)
SANGLI, MAHARASHTRA: Union agriculture minister Sharad Pawar today said FDI in multi-brand retail will cut down post-harvest losses to farmers and bring investment in cold-chain facilities. “Farmers will gain on at least two counts: significant reduction in post-harvest losses such as loss in transit (of produce) due to non-refrigeration and air conditioning transportation system, and better prices. Consumers will gain from lower prices, greater choice and higher quality,” Pawar told reporters here. He said the policy decision will boost investment in cold-chain facilities. "Post-harvest losses in the country are high. There are losses in the entire supply chain from farm to market. Investment in cold chains is required. More investment to set up such facilities will come with the entry of FDI. This will benefit both farmers and consumers," the agriculture minister said. Pawar is on two-day visit to Sangli and Kolhapur in the western Maharashtra region. (Times of India 13/10/12)

Famine status urged for Tamenglong district (20)
Imphal, October 14 2012: Nungba Area Citizen Welfare Association has submitted a memorandum to Chief Minister O Ibobi urging him to declare Tamenglong as a district affected by rodent menace. Predicting a devastating famine in the coming months, the association speculated starvation deaths if necessary measures are not taken up in time. 200-500 tins of paddy are normally harvested by a family every year in the district, the memorandum said and added that only 20-30 tins were reaped per family this year due to serious rodent menace, which has affected the crops. As the said harvest is likely to last only up to the end of December this year, the district is on the verge of facing a famine, the memorandum asserted further. It also urged the Chief Minister to make necessary arrangement to provide the farmers an alternative means of livelihood through relief and supply of quality seeds of rabi crops to make up the food deficit. (Manipur E-Pao 15/10/12)

30 agriculture dept officers suspended (20)
HYDERABAD: In a major clean-up operation initiated by the agriculture department, 30 agricultural officers of various ranks have been suspended for embezzlement of funds collected from farmers for the past two years. Agriculture commissioner K Madhusudan Rao issued the orders on Sunday suspending 24 agriculture officers, three assistant directors and three agriculture extension officers. According to sources, these officers have not remitted the money collected from farmers for supply of seeds for the past two years. The total amount unremitted to the government is around Rs 2 crore. Repeated reminders to these officers failed to yield any response. After reviewing the situation, commissioner K Madhusudan Rao issued suspension orders against them, sources in the department said. (Times of India 16/10/12)

MP aims for 20% agricultural growth (20)
New Delhi: Though Madhya Pradesh boasts a handsome growth of 18 per cent in agriculture this year, poor access to irrigation for farmers remains a big challenge for the authorities of. Experts and insiders fear that besides warehousing issues, gradual fragmentation of land poses a major challenge for agriculture. The real estate industry and other big-ticket investors are fast consuming arable lands across the state. Pest attacks, heavy rains and inclement weather also pose problems. “Inadequate irrigation infrastructure is the biggest challenge for us to attain the targeted growth, though we have a three-pronged agenda to attain 20 per cent growth this year,” admits D N Sharma, director, agriculture and adds, “Quality input has prompted farmers to retain farming as their prime business in the state.” Of the
total 72 lakh farmers in the state, hardly 30 per cent have access to irrigation. The ones in the low-lying areas are the worst suffers. Buoyed by the procurement of over 85 lakh tonnes of wheat, state is chalked out a strategy to overtake farming-dominated states like Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. In fact, the growth rate, which held at 9 per cent pace during the last Plan, is expected by the authorities to cross 20 per cent. The national average agriculture growth is 3 per cent. The primary reasons for buoyancy in agricultural productivity are surplus availability of seeds and fertilisers. (Business standard 17/10/12)

Farmer commits suicide in Gujarat (20)
AHMEDABAD: Despite Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi’s repeated assertions regarding the “prosperity” of farmers in his regime, yet another incident of a farmer committing suicide due to crop failure and increasing debts has been reported from the State. Police sources admitted that Jilubha Jethwa, a farmer in Raheja village in Mangrol taluka of Junagadh district in the Saurashtra region, committed suicide on Friday because of crop failure due to inadequate rainfall this year. Jilubha had sown groundnut in his four ‘bighas’ of land, but due to insufficient rainfall, the crop failed. Getting no assistance from the State government and being neck-deep in debt, the farmer committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree in his farm. According to official records, this is the 39th suicide due to crop failure in the Saurashtra region alone this year. Mr. Modi, however, has claimed that with more than 11 per cent “growth rate” in agriculture, most of the farmers had earned the ability to own four-wheelers. (The Hindu 19/10/12)

Two cotton ryots commit suicide (20)
ADILABAD: Balapur Poshetti, a 40-year-old cotton farmer from Mahalingi village in Tanur mandal of Adilabad district, committed suicide by consuming pesticide at his residence on Friday. According to the police, Poshetti was undergoing mental agony following failure of crop on his five acres. He had incurred a debt of Rs. 60,000, they added. Meanwhile, in a second incident, Ade Yadav, a cotton farmer, committed suicide on Friday perturbed over damage to the crop on his five acres of land due to excessive rainfall. He consumed pesticide at his residence in Degaon in Talamadugu mandal early in the day and died while undergoing treatment at RIMS, Adilabad. According to the police, he had incurred a debt of Rs. 60,000 to cultivate cotton. (The Hindu 20.10.12)

Speak about farmers: Vidarbha group tell Kejriwal (20)
Nagpur: The Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti has squarely blamed the IAC and all other political parties for shifting focus from the main issue of agrarian crisis in Vidarbha region, which has witnessed thousands of farmer suicides. The allegations of IAC activist Arvind Kejriwal on BJP National President Nitin Gadkari were restricted to Vidarbha irrigation water crisis limited to one dam. Instead of Vidarbha farmer suicides, upcoming power plants, water diversion and misuse of irrigation water, IAC’s single point agenda was to show the unholy relationship between BJP-NCP, Janandolan Samiti president Kishore Tiwari alleged. He urged all political parties and civil society members to take forward the issue to its logical conclusion to stop mass genocide of innocent farmers who are real victims. “We demand IAC to focus on main demands of Aam Aadmi, who are living in remote villages and are dying without food and medicine. The basic need is to change wrong model of development and perfect India’s economic policy and protect innocents besides exposing the corrupt,” Tiwari said in a release. (Hindustan Times 23/10/12)

Listen to the problems faced by farmers in Bihar (20)
Sitamarhi (Bihar): In August, Union minister for Steel Beni Prasad Verma stoked a controversy with his comment that price rise was beneficial for farmers. The opposition without missing a moment pounced on his remark accusing the government of being part of the “mehengai mafia” (price rise mafia). BJP leader Arun Jaitley said those who have made such statements are not aware that farmers are committing suicide due to the burden of debt and increase in input costs. Amid this furor, the farmer, who is being represented by so many, stands confused as, for him, the sensitivity of the issue is lost in the politics that is unlikely to change his ill fate. Be it drought or flood, inflation or deflation, he is the lone sufferer. In the same month, floods triggered by heavy rains in Nepal affected 158 panchayats spread over six districts in Bihar, uprooting 1.53 lakh people, as stated by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to the state legislative council. Although drought is believed to be the primary factor in causing devastation this year in most of the
region, the situation continues to remain unchanged for the villages bordering Nepal. For them, flood is the bane of their lives, destroying hundreds of acres of agricultural land - the only source of livelihood for the majority of villagers. As India’s most flood-prone State, 76 percent of the population in north Bihar lives under the recurring threat of flood devastation. The area prone to floods in Bihar (before its bifurcation with Jharkhand), as assessed by Rashtriya Barh Ayog (RBA), is 42.60 lakh hectares. Every year, besides the heavy rains, water released by Nepal is believed to be another major reason for the floods. Loss in farming is discouraging the young from adopting this profession and they are moving from their lands to the cities in search of better job opportunities. “Since our village is situated on the banks of the river, we face a flood like situation every year. It destroys the crops sometimes completely. Because of floods, we are unable to make ends meet. Aid from government faces political hurdles and never reaches us. This village is shown as 'flood affected', help and government aid is sought, but it never reaches us. On the other hand, fertilisers reach late and are provided when the crop is almost ready,” rued farmer Raj Kishore Yadav, 55. Farmers have always been the strength of our country, reflected by the fact that over sixty percent population is still dependent on agriculture. The Planning Commission makes it a point to devote sufficient schemes and policies for farmers, both at the Center and State level. Recently, the government of Bihar has started a Call Center to resolve the problems faced by farmers. A joint effort by the Department of Agriculture and Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO), this Center is situated in Chemical House of Mithapur Agricultural Farm in Patna. The Center will provide solutions to farmers for their agricultural problem. Twelve experts will be available on ten phone lines for the farmers. The interesting thing about the Center is that if a query cannot be answered immediately, it will be provided by the agricultural expert on a later date. In addition to this, 5459 quintals of advance paddy seeds are being provided to farmers on a subsidized rate under the ‘Chief Minister’s Seeds Rapid Expansion Scheme’ for which 90,996 farmers across the state have been selected. According to the State’s Agricultural Department, farmers will be given paddy seeds on 90pc subsidy. This will be provided through Bihar State Seeds Corporation. With so many efforts what are we lacking? The Centre and State governments have been making constant efforts to improve agricultural production. Why are they turning futile? Farmers who feed the entire nation have become so helpless that some of them feel that they have no alternate but to put an end to their constant miseries by committing suicide. Why does our Government fail to provide support during drought or flood like situations? Farmers need permanent solutions to these problems, failing which, as the trend already shows, the day is not far when every farmer will consider renouncing farming and moving towards other modes of employment. In such a situation, we might have to face dire consequences. The Charkha Development Communication Network feel that it is necessary for the government to seek the opinion of the farmers on what they require and not what the politicians want in order to stay in power. Solutions should be accessible to the farmers. Providing crores of rupees every year in the name of flood aid would not cease the trend of farmer suicides and it’s high time we understood this (New Kerala 24/10/12)

Farmers to march to Parliament on Nov 1 (20)
New Delhi: Farmers and agriculture labourers from about 24 states will march towards Parliament on November 1 for their demands including hike in amount under Indira Awas Yojana, separate budget for agriculture, pension and others. “During the last 14 years rule of the NDA and UPA, 2.6 lakh farmers have committed suicide. Price rise has affected the farmers and agriculture labourers the most,” CPI national secretary Atul Kumar Anjan told reporters here today. He said the farmers and agriculture labourers led by All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) will hold a march from Ramlila Maidan to Parliament on November 1 and will gherao Parliament. “The Land Acquisition Bill of 1894 must be scrapped,” Mr Anjan, who is also AIKS general secretary, said. He demanded that Rs three lakh be given under Indira Awas Yojana due to price rise. He claimed that if the reports of the National Commission on Farmers, chaired by Prof M S Swaminathan, be implemented, 80 per cent problem of the farmers will be solved. Former MP and BKMU general secretary Nagendra Nath Ojha alleged that the farmers and agriculture labourers have not received any benefit from the schemes of the UPA government including MGNREGA. (New Kerala 26/10/12)

Huge investment by textile mills may halt suicide by farmers (20)
MUMBAI: Investments to the tune of Rs. 3,834 crore by eight major textile processing companies in the suicide-prone zone of Vidarbha and Marathwada are expected to generate jobs in the near future, besides halting suicide by farmers. The investments, from a total of 411 proposals, are expected to fetch
jobs for more than 29,000 people in the cotton-growing belts of Vidarbha, Marathwada and Khandesh (north-western Maharashtra), said Textile Minister Arif Naseem Khan on Thursday. Eight major companies, including Oswal Spinning and Weaving Mills Ltd, Ginni International Ltd, Jindal Poly Films Ltd, the Jaideep Group of Industries and Shyam Indospin Ltd, are to invest in the cotton-producing belt. The move is expected to alleviate the sufferings of farmers and end the vicious cycle of suicides as they will get a better deal for cotton produce. "After ginning and pressing mills are ushered into the belt, competition will automatically be generated, and that will in the end prove beneficial to the farmer," he said, stating that 2,000 jobs had already been created. In March, the Cabinet formulated a textile policy aimed at bringing in investment to the tune of Rs. 40,000 crores and create employment opportunities for almost 12 lakh people in the cotton-growing belts. Among the highlights of the policy was provision of 12.5 per cent interest subsidy and 10 per cent capital subsidy for new cooperative and private sector textile units coming up. The Centre had also agreed to the setting up of 14 textile parks in the State. (The Hindu 26/10/12)

Debt relief panel inactive: Kisan Sabha (20)
KOZHIKODE: Kisan Sabha State general secretary Sathyan Mokeri on Friday said the State Debt Relief Commission had ceased to be of any help to farmers in distress. He cited suicide by farmers in Wayanad as proof of this. Mr. Mokeri said 34 farmers had committed suicide in the past 15 months in Wayanad district. The State government appeared to be insensitive to farmers' needs, he added. In a statement, Mr. Mokeri appealed to the State and Union governments to provide financial assistance to farmers in Kerala. He said farmers in debt continued to be targeted for revenue recovery action by banks for outstanding loans. Mr. Mokeri alleged that the government was dodging its responsibility to help farmers. (The Hindu 27/10/12)

State gets NHRC notice on farmer's suicide bid (20)
CUTTACK: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has issued notice to the State government on an alleged incident of human rights violation committed by a senior State government officer that forced a poor farmer in Ganjam district to make a suicide attempt by consuming pesticide. Taking up a petition filed by a State-based social organisation -- India Media Centre, the NHRC has issued the notices asking the Ganjam District Collector and the Superintendent of Police to file a detailed report on the issue within four weeks. The commission has also made it clear that in case the government fails to file the report within the period stipulated, it (the commission) will proceed with the case. A copy of the NHRC order has also been sent to the State Home Secretary and to the Inspector-General (IG) of the State Human Rights Protection Cell (HRPC). India Media Centre managing trustee Shree Akhand has petitioned the NHRC earlier this month urging the commission to order an impartial inquiry into the matter and award a compensation of Rs. 5 lakh to the farmer who is now recuperating after hospitalisation. The matter inter alia explained in the petition maintains that one Gantei Swain of Kabisuryanagar tehsil of Ganjam district was cultivating a patch of government land for past several years. On October 6 this year, local tehsildar Vivekananda Sahu with the help of some labourers damaged Gantei's crops after dismantling the fencing around the patch of the controversial land, the petition said. The petition further alleged that the tehsildar reportedly assaulted the poor farmer when the latter urged the official to at least wait until the crops ripen. "But when the tehsildar did not yield, the poor farmer took the extreme step of consuming pesticide in front of the tehsildar," the petition said. A critical Gantei was immediately rushed to the MKCG Medical College and Hospital of Berhampur from where he was shifted to another hospital in Visakhapatnam after his condition worsened. He was recently discharged from the hospital and is currently recuperating at home, according to petitioner advocate Nishikant Mishra. (The Hindu 31/10/12)

Draft Land Use Bill unacceptable in present form: Agriculture Minister (20)
Close on the heels of Revenue Department coming out against the draft Kerala Land Use Bill 2002, the Agriculture Department has also criticised it saying that the draft Bill would not be accepted as such. "We have a different opinion with regard to the draft. However, I am not disclosing it now," Agriculture Minister K P Mohanan told reporters here on Tuesday. "We will not allow the draft to be made a Bill in its present form. Though certain things can be agreed upon, the draft cannot be accepted as it is," he said and added that agriculture land would not be allowed to be converted for non-agriculture purposes. "The Bill, in its present form, could not protect the agriculture land. We will bring in changes in the draft," Mohanan said. Stating that it was just a draft, Mohanan said that the department’s views would be shared with the
Law Department at the earliest. He said that a discussion would be held with the department officials and the necessary changes that had to be made in the draft Bill would be finalised. "We will give our opinion by November 5," the Minister said. The circulation of the draft Kerala Land Use Bill 2002 by the Law Department among all the departments had drawn flak from the Revenue Department, which came out against the 'unilateral move.' Revenue Minister Adoor Prakash had said that all matters related to land should be handled by the Revenue Department. (Indian Express 31/10/12)

Three farmers commit suicide in Andhra Pradesh (20)
Karimnagar: Three cotton farmers from Karimnagar district of Andhra Pradesh allegedly committed suicide owing to indebtedness and crop failure, police said on Thursday. Bhimuni Kanakaiah (44), a cotton-grower from Suraiahpalli village killed himself by consuming pesticide in his field on Wednesday, they said, adding the deceased had borrowed a loan of Rs. 2 lakh but failed to repay it as the crop failed due to deficient rains. A case has been registered under Manthani police station limits. In another incident, Burra Ramesh Goud (27) took the extreme step by consuming pesticide on similar grounds at his house in Kamanpur block on Wednesday, police said. Another cotton farmer S Yadagiri (47) from Manikyapur village hung himself to a tree at his field on Wednesday, police said, adding he had incurred huge debts. (Hindustan Times 1/11/12)

Farmers seek higher state advised price for sugarcane (20)
LUCKNOW: Cane farmers and sugar millers in Uttar Pradesh inched closer to a state advised price (SAP) for sugarcane on Wednesday after the final meeting between the stakeholders and the state government. During the second meeting to fix the SAP for the 2012-13 season, farmer groups persisted with their demands for fixing SAP higher than Rs 300. Saying their input costs ranged between Rs 250 in western UP and Rs 287 in eastern and central parts of the state, the farmers' claims were backed by inputs from government institutes -- Sugarcane Research Farm in Shahjahanpur, Sardar Patel University of Agriculture, Meerut and Indian Institute of Sugarcane Research, Lucknow, each submitting input costs ranging between Rs 228 and Rs 234 per quintal. Arguing that SAP should be higher than Rs 300, Sudhir Panwar of Kisan Jagriti Manch said last year SAP was 9.2% of the prevailing sugar prices. This year, with sugar prices pegged between Rs 3,400 and Rs 3,800 per quintal and unlikely to dip, the SAP should be Rs 312.80 considering the prevailing sugar prices. On Wednesday, farmers also requested the state government to declare the state advised price soon to allow mills to begin crushing soon. State representatives of the Indian Sugar Mill Association, Shyamlal Gupta, however, opposed any changes or increase in sugarcane prices from last year's Rs 250 per quintal because of the losses incurred by sugar mills during the previous season. Farmer groups, however, argued that this year, the sugarcane acreage in UP increased by 7%, so they should be allowed the same profits like last year. (Times of India 1/11/12)

UP government withdraws cases against Bhatta farmers (20)
Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government has withdrawn cases registered against the farmers of Bhatta-Parsaul villages of Gautam Budh Nagar district in May 2011. “The state government has withdrawn in public interest the cases registered against the Bhatta-Parsaul farmers in May 2011. This will bring relief to a large number of innocent farmers,” said chief minister Akhilesh Yadav in a statement here. “The Bahujan Samaj Party-led government had got the cases registered to perpetrate atrocities on the innocent farmers,” Yadav said. He said while he had made a promise before the 2012 assembly elections that he would withdraw the fake cases against the farmers of Bhatta Parsaul. “By withdrawing the cases, we have fulfilled another election promise made to the people,” the UP chief minister said. The Bhatta-Parsaul protests by farmers had become a major political issue after three people died, allegedly in police firing on the agitators. Congress general secretary Rahul Gandhi had defied all police arrangements to reach the fortified Bhatta-Parsaul villages and met the farmers there. Later, the police had forced Rahul to leave the place, triggering high drama. The farmers at the two villages had been carrying out an agitation to press their demand for an increase in the compensation for acquisition of land. Most of these cases had been registered against farmer leaders Manvir Singh Teotia, Premveer, Kale Singh, Gaje Singh, Kiran Pal, Dhan Singh and others at the Dankaur police station of Gautam Budh Nagar district. Yadav said the scrutiny of these cases revealed that the farmers were forced to agitate only due to non-payment of adequate compensation for acquisition of land. The state government has already withdrawn cases against the farmers of Tappal in Aligarh. (Hindustan Times 3/11/12)
Centre's norms on jute will trigger farmers' suicides: Mamata Banerjee (20)
Kolkata: Condemning the central government's decision to dilute reservation norms for compulsory use of jute bags for packaging food grains and sugar, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee Tuesday said the move would compel the farmers to commit suicide, In a sharp attack on the Congress-led UPA dispensation, Banerjee said: "It is high time for the minority UPA-II government to go. Farmers, workers and common people are not safe under this regime." She also demanded immediate withdrawal of the decision. "I appeal to all my brothers and sisters of the country to unite and raise their voices against these atrocities," she wrote on social networking website Facebook. Condemning the dilution of reservation norms for compulsory use of jute bags for packaging of food grains and sugar by 10 percent and 60 percent respectively for the year 2012-13, Banerjee said the price of raw jute has "drastically fallen" from Rs.550 to Rs.200 per quintal. "It is a dangerous situation. The central government must not compel farmers to commit suicide," she said. The central government Nov 2 relaxed the compulsory jute packing norms by allowing mills to pack only 40 per cent of their sugar output in jute bags this year, instead of 100 per cent. Under the Jute Packaging Materials Act (JPMA), 1987, the government had made 100 per cent mandatory reservation for jute bags for packaging of sugar and food grains. Banerjee said farmers of West Bengal, the largest jute-growing state and other eastern states like Bihar and Assam would suffer severely. "Poor farmers and common people are already suffering from the onslaught of spiralling prices of basic necessities. This anti-farmer decision of the central government will add more miseries to the livelihood of millions of small and marginal jute cultivators, and workmen involved in manufacturing of jute bags," Banerjee said. (New Kerala 6/11/12)

Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission summons Raisen collector, SP (20)
BHOPAL: Madhya Pradesh Human Rights Commission (MPHRC) has censured the district administration on the incident of death of a farmer from Raisen during an agitation in May this year. The Commission has summoned Raisen collector, Mohan Lal Meena, superintendent of police, IP Kulshreshtha and four other officials to appear before its two-member bench on December 21. The commission observed that police fired 18 rounds of bullets from AK47 rifle and 5 rounds from 9 mm pistol on the farmers leading to the death of the farmer, Hari Singh in Bareli tehsil of Raisen. "Stern action would be initiated against the officials if they fail to turn up before the commission on the given date", said acting chairman of the commission justice AK Saxena. Commission observed that farmers protest was mainly due to laxity of officials. Due to lack of gunny bags, the process of weighing and selling wheat was getting delayed, the commission observed. Without understanding the issue, administration kept on sending SMSs to farmers for getting their agriculture produce at the grain markets. It resulted into a mess and agriculture produce got soggy, which latter sparked agitation by farmers. However, despite having the complete information of farmers’ problem and their scheduled protest on May 7, the administration did nothing to avert it. It rather used force and opened fire on farmers, the commission observed. "We have observed that this act of local administration there violated the human rights ", said the joint director (PR) Rohit Mehta. Indefinite curfew was clamped in Bareli town after the incident in which 42 people were injured in the police firing. The protest was organized by the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), affiliated to the ruling BJP. (Times of India 10/11/12)

Koraput farmers demand indemnity for crop loss (20)
More than hundred farmers of Kundura block in Koraput district, met Jeypore Sub-Collector Birendra Korkora, demanding compensation for the crop losses they incurred due to the untimely rains triggered by cyclone Nilam. The farmers while showing samples of their damaged crops including paddy, maize and ragi, which germinated after getting soaked in rainwater submitted a 12-point charter of demands which included waiver of crop loan, increase in the minimum support price (MSP) of paddy and other agriculture produces keeping in view the high prices of pesticides and fertilisers besides providing irrigation facility by setting up lift irrigation points. They also demanded hike in daily wage. Krushak Kalyan Manch secretary Narendra Kumar Pradhan demanded that the MSP for a quintal of paddy be fixed at Rs 2,000. He warned of agitation in case of delay in providing compensation to the farmers. Sub-Collector Korkora while discussions with Kundra Tehsildar Jayendra Sethi and Agriculture Officer Bidyadhar Nayak assured the farmers to consider their demands after getting detailed reports regarding crop loss in various areas of the block by the concerned officials. (Pioneer 10/11/12)
Three Vidarbha farmers commit suicide (20)
Mumbai: The trend of suicides in Vidarbha, known as the white gold belt of Maharashtra, continued with three more farmers taking their lives on Saturday, according to a watchdog. Talking to Deccan Herald over the phone from Nagpur, Kishore Tiwari of Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti said: “We have received confirmed reports from the interiors that three debt-ridden farmers — Mangesh More of Virud village at Chandrapur, Champat Shendre of Junapani village at Wardha and Vasant Rathode of Kinhala village at Yavatmal—took their lives on Saturday. The total number of “farmland” suicides this year till now has gone up to 624. Tiwari said: “And we are not taking into account suicides which are the result of other socio-psychological factors. We only record suicides which are a result of politico-economic policies. While state Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan may be celebrating his second anniversary on the chair as well as Dhanteras and Diwali, the air in Vidarbha reeks of despondency.” The suicide rate among the agrarian community is a result of an interplay of various factors and could not be reduced to one cause. But, the introduction of BT cotton and cash crop like soya bean due to pest attacks, erratic rain coupled with increasing cultivation costs were the key traps “taking lives of farmers.” Moreover, the government had not bothered to intervene and check the slide in the market prices of these crops; in other words the farmers are forced to off-load their crops at dirt cheap prices amidst a system with no bail out structures or credit facilities. Tiwari pointed out that in the coming season the death knell would continue in Vidarbha, “unless the government intervenes, restore credit facilities for the next cultivation season and arrange for food and health security for the agrarian community.” (Deccan Herald 12/11/12)

2 farmers killed in Maha violence, 3 policemen injured (20)
Pune, Nov 13: Two farmers were killed while three policemen were injured after an agitation by sugarcane farmers to secure higher prices for their crops turned violent in western Maharashtra on Monday. One of the dead farmers were killed in police firing. A number of vehicles were either damaged or burnt during the violence. A small farmer from Vasagade village in Singli, Chandrakant Nalawade, was killed when the police started firing to control the agitators after the latter reportedly turned violent and set a police motorcycle ablaze. The other victim, Kundalik Kokate, died of head injuries after he fell while trying to deflate the tyre of a sand-laden truck, which was stopped by the protesters, police said. As the news of the two farmers death and the detention of Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatna (SSS) leader Raju Shetty spread like wild fire, the entire western Maharashtra was engulfed by violence. The protestors halted traffic and targetted vehicles, including public and private transport ones, and torched them. Traffic was paralysed on Pune-Bangalore highway and also in other parts, including Pune, Sangli, Satara, Solapur and Kolhapur. The police resorted to lathi-charge and held thousands of protesting farmers. Several passengers were left stranded in Pune as the state transport authorities suspended bus service to the violence-affected parts. Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation sources said that 40 state transport buses were damaged by the agitators on the Pune-Solapur and Pune-Kolhapur routes. Some private buses were also set on fire. Bus services on Mumbai, Nashik and Aurangabad routes, however, remained unaffected. (One India 13/11/12)

Indian council of agricultural research assures help in setting up agriculture college (20)
PANAJI: Indian council of agricultural research (ICAR) has assured its assistance to Goa government in setting up an agriculture college in the state and has okayed a proposal to set up an examination centre for students pursuing agro courses. These were some of the Goa-specific issues discussed at the 22nd regional council meeting of region VII, comprising Goa, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh at Dona Paula on November 9 and 10. “If Goa government comes up with a proposal to set up an agriculture college, Balasaheb Sawant Konkan Krishi Vidhyapith, can grant it the recognition,” N P Singh, director, ICAR, Old Goa said. While this proposal is in the domain of Goa government to act upon, ICAR has agreed to set up an examination centre for students in post graduate and undergraduate courses in agriculture. "We have tentatively decided to conduct exams at ICAR research complex Old Goa, but the centre will be definitely in Goa,” Singh added. At present, the nearest centre for students is either Dapoli in Maharashtra or Dharwad in Karnataka. As the number of seats for Goan students at the Dapoli University is only nine, the regional meeting mooted an increase in quota for them. The premier agricultural research institution also assured technological support to improve production of rice, cashew, and horticultural crops in Goa. Crop management includes technical back up to tackle pests, soil management and other inputs. "We will also help the state in conducting research in khazan land,” Singh said. (Times of India 14/11/12)
**Sugarcane farmers clash with cops, stir intensifies (20)**

Mumbai: A 20-year-old farmer was injured in police firing on Wednesday, as the sugarcane growers — demanding a higher price for their produce — attacked a police station in Sangli district, set on fire a police jeep and damaged several vehicles at Kolhapur in western Maharashtra. On a day when three farmers’ outfits — led by MP Raju Shetty, Sharad Joshi and Raghunathdada Patil — indicated that they would join hands to take the ongoing agitation forward, the sugarcane growers — owing allegiance to incarcerated Joshi — intensified their protests to highlight their demand. Two farmers had been killed and more than a dozen others injured in the protests staged by sugarcane growers on Monday. The agitating farmers are demanding a price of `3,000 per tonne of sugarcane as against the first procurement price of `2,300 per tonne of the produce offered by co-operative sugar factories in the sugarcane-rich districts of Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara. Later in the afternoon, scores of farmers — demanding the release of protesters detained earlier in the day during the agitation — attacked the Ashta police station in Sangli district with stones. They also damaged a milk van and threatened to blow up a gas tanker plying on the Sangli-Islampur road. In their effort to pacify the farmers, the police opened fire, injuring Pravin Bharat Patil in his leg. Pravin is under treatment at a private hospital at Sangli. A few policemen were injured in the stone-pelting indulged in by protesters. The farmers took out a mock funeral procession of Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar and burnt his effigy at Shiye in Karvir taluka of Kolhapur district. Earlier in the day, Swabhimani Shetkari Sanghatana leader Sadabahu Khot, who had been arrested on Monday, was released on bail from Pune’s Yerwada jail. In a related development, noted social activist Anna Hazare and activist-turned-politician Arvind Kejriwal threw their lot with the agitating farmers. Being seen as an effort to draw mileage in the media, the statements of solidarity issued by Hazare and Kejriwal did not elicit any response from the agitating farmers. For, both Hazare and Kejriwal had never been in the past associated with the sugarcane growers' agitation. (Pioneer 15/11/12)

**Governor demands free education, healthcare for farmers’ families (20)**

BANGALORE: Governor H.R. Bhardwaj on Tuesday urged the Centre and the State governments to provide free education to the children of farmers besides bearing their medical expenses to bring about their development. Presenting awards to innovative farmers at a programme organised by the University of Agricultural Sciences-Bangalore on its campus, the Governor said: “We are a society committed to social and economic justice. There is no reason why we should not provide first grade education free of cost to children of farmers who take care of the country’s food security.” He said despite the agrarian crisis, the farmers of the country had done so well that the farm production had doubled. This was the time for the government to take up special measures for their development, he said. He also said “something is really wrong somewhere” if the annadaatha (one who gives food) is committing suicide. He pointed out that nowhere in the world were farmers committing suicide due to an agrarian crisis. “UAS-B Vice-Chancellor K. Narayana Gowda was present on the occasion. (The Hindu 28/11/12)

**Small, marginal farmers have reason to cheer (20)**

KANPUR: Good news for the not so big farmers. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) will be providing input support, including bio-fertilizers, chemicals and high yielding varieties of seeds to marginal or small farmers who own land area less than one or between one and two hectares, respectively. The support rendered by ICAR will not include cash help but input support of worth Rs 10,000 to individual farmer. This help will be given to 12 farmers identified by Chandra Shekhar Azad (CSA) University of Agriculture and Technology which is one among 74 centres of All India Co-ordinated Research Project on Integrated Farming System. The project of ICAR is being undertaken by CSA University not only with the aim to help marginal and small farmers enhance their income but also to provide them with round the year employment and livelihood. It will also help increase the gross domestic product (GDP) as 86% of farmers in the country come under marginal or small farmer category having land either less then one hectare or between one and two hectares and at present these farmers do not contribute much to the country and the GDP. The basic concept of the project being that along with cultivating crops, the farmers need to engage in allied activities like animal husbandry, bee-keeping, gardening, mineral mixture, fishery, floriculture, vegetable production, horticulture to name a few. They would be taught integrated farming methods. Principal of the ICAR’s pilot project is M P Yadav, HOD, Agronomy Department, CSA University under whose supervision the project is being operated. Talking to TOI, assistant professor Naushad Khan of CSA University, involved in the project, informed, “So far,
farmers have remained completely dependent on agriculture, but now we will teach them ways to increase their income. Along with cultivating crops, farmers will be taught about various other techniques by which they can earn more. These allied activities include animal husbandry, fishery, floriculture, vegetable production and horticulture.” Khan added that apart from these benefits, the farmer will be able to get food and nutritional security. When asked if the university has identified farmers who will get the benefit of the ICAR's project, Khan said, 12 farmers of rural pockets of Kaushambi district had been identified by the university to be given necessary intervention which includes providing HYV seeds, bio-fertilizers etc of up to Rs 10,000 per farmer. It is worth mentioning here that the CSA University will receive funds for the purpose from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) as part of the contingency fund. When questioned about the need of introducing such a project for farmers by ICAR, the CSA scientist said 86% farmers in the country were marginal with agricultural land either below one hectare contribute nothing in the market. According to the statistics (done by ICAR), while marginal farmers contribute nothing to market in terms of agricultural produce, small farmers sells 54% of their produce and consumes the remaining part. Big farmers owning more than 2 hectares land sell 94% produce and consume the rest. But since the percentage of marginal and small farmers is higher in the country, the ICAR developed a pilot project to provide farmers with a support of Rs 10,000 by giving required inputs instead of cash. The CSA scientist said farmers benefitting from the ICAR's project are identified based on the crop module used by them and the constituents it contains. It is only after this that scientists from CSA University would provide technical suggestion and other required intervention, he added. (Times of India 29/11/12)

Farmers forced to sell produce at meagre prices, alleges RLD (20)
Accusing the Samajwadi Party government in UP of being "anti-farmer”, the Rashtriya Lok Dal on Friday claimed that 80% of the paddy purchase centres were closed forcing the farmers to sell off their produce at meagre prices. The allegation comes close on the heels of the party raking up the issue of the state government not declaring the state advisory price for sugarcane, which led the farmers to go in for distress sale of the sugar cane. RLD state president, Munna Singh Chauhan alleged that the state government had bought around 2 lakh tonne of paddy. “Most of this has been purchased by the middlemen and traders,” Chauhan alleged. Demanding an inquiry into this purchase of paddy, Chauhan said that the SP government had stated that it would pay 50% additional price on procurement of paddy and sugarcane. "That does not seem to happen at this point of time,” Chauhan stated and claimed that farmers are forcibly returned from the procurement centres citing poor quality of paddy. "It is the duty of the state government to constitute an inquiry and see that farmers are not harassed by the officials," the party said in a statement. The party alleged that even the DAP fertilisers are not made available to the farmers at an appropriate price. “Hence these farmers are forced to buy fertilizers at higher prices,” Chauhan said. Moreover, neither water has been released in the canals nor they have been cleared of the silt by the irrigation department. This is despite the fact that the Rabi season is fast approaching, RLD spokesperson, KK Tripathi said. (Times of India 1/12/12)

West Odisha farmers block roads, demand bonus (20)
Sambalpur: Farmers from as many as 50 organisations across western Odisha blocked the National Highways and State Highways with their 15-point charter of demands. Due to the road blocks at different parts of the region, vehicles remained stranded in long lines for more than four hours. In some districts, farmers also gheraoed the District Collectors, sources said. Earlier, on October 31, the farmers of the region had gheraoed the office of the RDC at Sambalpur and submitted an ultimatum to fulfill all their 15 demands. "When Government didn’t take any action in fulfilling the genuine demands of the farmers, we blocked the roads to draw the attention of the Government towards the farmers’ problems, including payment of `300 as bonus for each quintal of paddy,” said Saroj, a farmer leader. Bonus apart, the farmers demanded uniform policy for sale and purchase of paddy all over the State, each village as unit for insurance coverage, withdrawal of FDI in retail market, no permission to agencies having insufficient infrastructure to purchase paddy and change in State Relief Code, among others. The farmers also vehemently protested establishment of power plants in different places of western Odisha including Sundargarh, Rairakhol and Birmaharajpur since these plants are harmful for agricultural operation. “We will keep fighting for the interest of the farmers till all the 15 demands are fulfilled,” said Ashok Pradhan of Paschima Odisha Krushak Sangathan Samanwaya Samity. RDC Dr AC Padhiary said that the Government was careful enough towards the demands of the farmers and their problems. “Steps are...
being taken to safeguard their interest since they are the backbone of the country," Dr. Padhiary assured. Massive security arrangements were made at strategic locations, including the main chowks, to prevent any untoward incidents. “The Bandh passed off peacefully and there had been no unpleasant situation anywhere,” Sambalpur Additional SP DK Deo informed. (Pioneer 4/12/12)

Cotton farmers allege denial of MSP for their produce (20)
KHAMMAM: The cotton farmers narrated about their “unabated exploitation” by the greedy traders at the cotton market yard here when a team of revenue officials led by Revenue Divisional Officer V. Venkateshwarlu visited the yard on Tuesday to take stock of the situation. Some of the aggrieved farmers expressed their anguish over the sorry state of affairs at the market yard and alleged denial of minimum support price to their cotton produce. They bitterly complained against the “greedy traders” accusing them of colluding with some errant staff of the cotton purchase centre of Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) at the yard. They further alleged that the errant employees manning the CCI centre were depriving them of remunerative price for their produce on the pretext of “poor quality”. A young farmer explained about the “modus operandi” of the errant traders whom he charged with purchasing cotton from the gullible cotton growers by exploiting their vulnerable situation at prices much below the MSP of 3,900 per quintal. The errant traders would then sell the same cotton to the CCI at the MSP by pretending themselves as farmers, he pointed out hinting at an unholy nexus between the greedy traders and errant staff members at the yard. Some representatives of the farmers associations have apprised the officials of the purchase of only 1.03 lakh quintals of cotton by the CCI as against the 4.25 lakh quintals of cotton by the traders at the yard so far in this current season. A detailed report on the prevailing situation at the yard will be submitted to the higher authorities, said the RDO Venkateshwarlu. A team of revenue employees will be deputed to the market yard to oversee the transactions at the yard and ensure MSP to all the farmers, he said. (The Hindu 5/12/12)

FDI will not help India's people, economy: Sitaram Yechury (20)
New Delhi: Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) leader Sitaram Yechury on Thursday slammed the UPA's move to bring FDI in retail, saying it would be of no benefit either to the people or the economy. "If this was to be of any benefit to the people and the economy, we would have supported it. But this is not. We had heard the same arguments at the time of the Indo-US nuclear deal ... That it would help in providing power to millions of households. "Instead, we have had one of the most severe power cuts in the summer past," Yechury said, while speaking on the debate in the Rajya Sabha on FDI in retail. He sought to counter the government's arguments favouring FDI in retail. "You say employment will increase. How much truth is there in that," he said, citing a US Senate Committee report which stated that Wal-Mart was the death knell for small-scale shopkeepers and workers. "It is a myth that there is going to be an increase in employment. Rather, there will be a contraction," Yechury said. "You say that farmers will benefit from FDI in retail. But take a look at the world around you. Whether it is cocoa farmers in Ghana or banana farmers in Latin America, nobody has benefited from FDI," he said. "The government says that prices will come down, wages will increase and wastage will decrease. The experience of the world does not go down with this explanation," he contended. "If FDI is brought in, unemployment will increase. Farmers and consumers will be hurt. We believe FDI will be a loss to the nation. We urge the government to think again and not take this decision. This is not in favour of the country," Yechury said. (DNBA 6/12/12)

FDI will bring new technology in farming: Manmohan (20)
LUDHIANA: A day after winning Parliament's approval for allowing FDI in retail, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday voiced confidence that it will benefit farmers and consumers and introduce new technology and investment in marketing agricultural produce. He also said that the decision to allow FDI in retail was "strongly supported by farmer organisations in Punjab." "It (FDI) will introduce new technology and investment in marketing agricultural produce. India must take full advantage of modern technology and operational and management experience of big supply chains in the food retail business to make this happen," Singh said speaking as a chief guest at Punjab Agricultural University's (PAU) golden jubilee function here. "I am confident that it will benefit the farmers, and the consumers and our country," the Prime Minister said. Government had won the approval of Parliament on Friday to its controversial decision of allowing FDI in multi-brand retail with a motion against it being defeated convincingly in Rajya Sabha, as BSP voted in favour of UPA. 123 members had voted against the motion.
while 109 voted in favour after a debate during which the Opposition had attacked the proposal to allow 51 per cent FDI in multi-brand retail, while the government had strongly justified it saying it was in the best interest of the country. Speaking at the University, Singh asked leading farm varsities like PAU to gear up to meet the existing and future challenges in the agriculture sector. The Prime Minister touched on a range of issues facing the country's agriculture from over-exploitation of ground water to crop diversification and how PAU could help India tackle the challenges of future. He noted that some of the crops are perishable and therefore pose special post-harvest handling and marketing problems which affect farm incomes. "Agricultural supply chains in India are highly fragmented and inefficient, leading to losses to both producers and consumers. Consumers pay high prices but the benefit of these high prices do not reach the producers. The development of efficient and vertically integrated supply chains in agriculture can take care of these issues," he said. The Prime Minister said that the scope for building such supply chains is especially large in more advanced agricultural states and Punjab can be a torch bearer in this shift. "Investment in back-end infrastructure has the potential of minimising wastage, especially of perishable fresh foods and vegetables, and increasing the income of farmers. Punjab should take the lead in encouraging best practices in crop management and improving food safety and hygiene. Investment in marketing linkages would be greatly facilitated by supporting changes in the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee Act which would allow private markets to develop," he pointed out. (Times of India 8/12/12)

Uproar in LS for relief to farmers (20)
New Delhi: The resentment among farmers of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar over non-procurement of paddy by the Centre resonated in the Lok Sabha on Friday. MPs belonging to the BJP, Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and others created uproar in the Lower House demanding immediate intervention of the Centre to provide relief to farmers. This led Finance Minister P Chidambaram to announce that the Government will soon call a meeting of the States to address the issue. Food Minister KV Thomas also assured of providing necessary assistance to the States, including UP and Bihar. Soon after the Question Hour, Congress MP Jagadambika Pal raised the matter and was immediately joined by other MPs from the BJP, SP, RJ, Left and Trinamool. Amidst a din, the House was adjourned till 2 pm. When the House re-assembled, SP chief Mulayam Singh Yadav claimed that fearing disciplinary action, FCI officials in Uttar Pradesh have rejected rice procured from mills despite accepting it in the first place on grounds of poor quality. "Nearly 90,000 metric tonnes of rice have been rejected after being accepted by FDI. It has created problems for farmers," Yadav said adding the State Government has already requested the Centre to lower the quality benchmarks for rice procurement. "Nearly 90,000 metric tonnes of rice have been rejected after being accepted by FDI. It has created problems for farmers," Yadav said adding the State Government has already requested the Centre to lower the quality benchmarks for rice procurement. BJP's Syed Shahnawaz Hussain said while State Governments of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh were procuring the entire paddy cultivation from farmers, the Centre was not doing the same. "Centre is only giving assurance. There is no action," the Bhagalpur MP said. Chidambaram sought to assuage the agitating members, but members from SP, BJD, the Left, RJ, and Trinamool Congress trooped into the Well shouting slogans like kisan virodhi sakar nahi chalegi. The House was adjourned again for five minutes and when it re-assembled again. Thomas said a high-level delegation will visit UP and Bihar to look into the problems in procurement of paddy, especially quality issues. Regarding West Bengal also, the Minister said he would do whatever is necessary. Saugata Roy (TMC) requested the Minister to consider the general demand from farmers that per quintal price of paddy be increased to Rs 1,350 per quintal from the current level of Rs 1,250 per quintal. (Pioneer 9/12/12)

Agriculture facing slow growth: Badal (20)
Ludhiana: Warning that the present farm crisis, if unattended, could turn out to be a grave issue, Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal on Saturday said that it could have serious implications likely to cause social turmoil and law and order problem in the country. Address the Golden Jubilee Convocation at PAU which was presided by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Badal said that farmers of Punjab were totally demoralised due to heavy debt to the tune of 35,000 crore. “Agriculture was a no longer a remunerative profession as it faced the crisis of slow growth, declining farm income and many small and marginal farmers had already left agriculture,” said Badal. Emphasising on farm diversification in the State, the Chief Minister urged the Prime Minister to immediately set up a technology mission for diversification of Agriculture with an allocation of 5,000 crore and diversification Mission for the Green Revolution States in Northern India. Badal pointed out that now the fate of farmers was in the hands of Government of India as all the powers like fixing cost of agricultural inputs i.e. fertilisers, pesticides, diesel
etc. and even the Minimum Support Price (MSP) was solely vested in it and states had hardly any say in these crucial decisions. He also impressed upon the need to provide adequate subsidy to the farmers to boost their morale and enhance farm productivity. Lauding the enormous contribution of Punjab farmers in making the country not only self-reliant but surplus in food production, Badal recalled those unfortunate days when India faced acute shortage of food grains. He, however, said that this all had been achieved at a huge sacrifice of our natural assets land fertility and water in national interest. “Now it was a pay back time for Centre to acknowledge the services rendered by our farmers by giving them their share overdue since long,” the CM said. Badal expressed gratitude to the Prime Minister for sanctioning Borlaug Institute and the Directorate of Maize Research (DMR) to Punjab, but also demanded a Center of Excellence for Research in Soyabean to be set up in the state to boost farm diversification in the big way. Besides, he also requested the Prime Minister to sanction another Center of Excellence for Research Fisheries in the state as fisheries had a vast scope to give a fillip to the allied farming in the State. In his convocation address, Punjab Governor and Chancellor of PAU, Shivraj Patil, said that the Prime Minister has done his best to strengthen the economy of the country, and to see that the production in all fields, including agriculture, is increased. (Pioneer 10/12/12)

University of Agricultural Sciences encourages women to become agri-entrepreneurs (20)
HUBLI: The University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, has initiated a training programme to encourage rural women to take up sustainable income generating agricultural activities. Experts and four associate scientists from UAS have taken up 28 villages in four districts of Gadag, Dharwad, Uttar Kannada and Belgaum to impart training to rural women under the theme of 'Sustainable Income Generating Agricultural Activities'. The programme will motivate rural women to take up agricultural entrepreneurship and also provide technical inputs on potential areas in the agricultural sector suitable for commercial exploitation. The experts will train them on sustainable dairy farming through increased production of milk in dairies, producing vermicompost, growing vegetables at home with the help of organic farming, and also how to pack and label their products. Training will also be imparted on how to prepare vegetable pickles, using vegetables grown in their fields. They are also getting trained in making herbal products using gooseberry and soapberries. Speaking to TOI, Suma Hasalkar, project investigator, said they had completed training in 17 villages of the 28. Training will begin in the remaining villages in December and January. Twenty five interested women are chosen from each village for the government-funded training. Experts from UAS are organizing seven-day training camps in these villages to educate the villagers on various aspects of agri-entrepreneurship and providing them information on the various facilities available from the government. Geeta C, staff of the UAS, said many rural women were already managing their own dairy and the university was only interested in teaching them scientific methods for better yield. (Times of India 16/12/12)

Soon direct cash subsidy for UP farmers (20)
Lucknow: Soon, the state’s agriculture department will provide direct cash subsidy to farmers through its various schemes. The matter is under consideration by a committee constituted by Agriculture Production Commissioner (APC) Alok Ranjan and is likely to be implemented soon. “It is an ambitious scheme of the agriculture department. Presently, the modalities are being worked out by a high-level committee. All the schemes which include subsidies by the agriculture department will be covered under this. The subsidy will be transferred directly to the farmer’s account,” Dev Mitra Singh, Director, Agriculture Department said. Ranjan said that the committee constituted by him includes principal secretaries of agriculture, horticulture, co-operative and some other officials. “The committee is likely to submit its report within a month. Then we will study the recommendations. We are seriously planning to provide cash subsidy instead of commodity,” he added. He also said that the stress will be on the safeguards in the scheme so that the cash subsidy is not misutilised. “It is a major hurdle and we have to plug all the loopholes,” he said. He also claimed that the system will be put in place hopefully by next year. “After getting a report within a month, we will be able to implement it from the next financial year,” Ranjan stated. All the major schemes of the agriculture department which involve subsidy will be covered in the scheme. The major schemes will be supply of micro-nutrients on which the farmers get 75 per cent subsidy. Major micro-nutrients used by UP farmers include zinc, sulphur, iron, boron, magnesium etc. Subsidy of 50 per cent is also provided on different pesticides. There are nearly 150 different types of pesticides provided by the agriculture department. (Indian Express 16/12/12)
Singur farmers to welcome Tatas provided compensation is doubled (20)

Singur/Kolkata: A day after industrialist Ratan Tata lamented the exit of the Nano project from Singur; unwilling farmers in the area welcomed him back provided that their compensation is doubled. “We are gradually disenchanted with the legal course adopted by the state government. The Singur law is questionable in the eyes of the court. Under such circumstances, we want an amicable solution between the state and the Tatas. We are ready to part with our land if compensation is doubled,” said Par Gopalnagar resident Bidyut Manna, who possesses 0.6 acres of land. At present, the Singur land is categorised into two types, with their rates fixed by the erstwhile state government at Rs. 9 lakh per acre and Rs. 12 lakh per acre. “Since the high court has already struck down the law as null and void, we are apprehensive about the Supreme Court judgment as well and doubt the merit of the case,” Manna told HT, anxiety dripping from his voice. On Sunday, Ratan Tata remarked in Mumbai that the Singur episode was a great disappointment and he felt that the plant could have generated more than 7000 jobs. He also added that an industry could not be run on police protection, while hinting that he would be ready to slog it out at the court against the state government and might eventually return to invest in West Bengal. “We do not want any more uncertainty over the fate of our land. Let the state government take the Tatas and villagers into confidence and solve the problem once and for all. If required we will let go our land, but the present compensation structure is not acceptable to us,” said Jayanta Manna, resident of Gopalnagar and owner of one acre of land. But not all of Singur’s unwilling farmers are ready to give away their land. A section of landowners are still determined to have their land back at any cost. “We want our land back. Unless the land is returned, Tatas would not be allowed to have industries here,” warns Shyamali and Tarini Bag, owners of 1.3 acres of land in Beraberi village. The couple spent seven nights in prison during the December 2006 agitation. (Hindustan Times 18/12/12)

Farmers told to launch united struggle against fiscal policies (20)

VIJAYAWADA: Inaugurating the State convention of the Rythu Coolie Sangham, Andhra Pradesh, (affiliated to the All India Khet Mazdoor Kisan Sabha) here on Tuesday Prof. Chowdary said different farmers’ associations were making separate demands for subsidies, remunerative prices for their produce, crop insurance and quality control on inputs, but the primary cause for their plight was the faulty economic policies of the country. He said despite the promises made by leaders such as former Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy the suicides of farmers continued even till today. Stating that there was a lot of difference in the statistics being published by different agencies on the number of suicides, Prof. Chowdary said he believed that two farmers were committing suicide every hour in the country. There was a great variation in the figures published by different agencies because the government agencies were not recording tenants as farmers at all. The percentage of farmers ensnared in the debt trap was also growing. Currently 82 per cent of the farmers were caught in the debt trap. According to a survey up to 50 per cent of the farmers in the country do not want to continue in agriculture, he said. Giving these figures Prof. Chowdary said the crisis in the agricultural sector was predicted by revolutionary leader Tarimela Nagi Reddy decades ago. The agricultural system of the farmers which was more environment-friendly was totally destroyed to give control to the multi-national companies and ‘imperialist nations’, he said. He said this should not be seen as a crisis of the farmers alone, because it had an affect on rural economy. Rural poverty was on the rise from 35 per cent a few years ago to 50 per cent today. A report submitted by Arjun Sengupta put rural poverty in the country at 70 per cent. Prof. Chowdary said corporate agriculture that was suggested a while ago and contract agriculture that was coming into vogue more recently would end up counter productive resulting in farmers losing rights over their lands and becoming landless peasants. Rythu Coolie Sangham State secretary K Kotaiah welcomed the gathering and president Simhadri Jhansi presided. Sambalpur University economics professor Gholak Biharinath, AIKMKS central secretariat members Vindhai Vemdan, Srikanth Mohanti, State vice-president Gurram Vijaya Kumar, joint secretary J Kishore Babu, and State leader M. Bhargavasri were on the dais. (The Hindu 19/12/12)
DMK, AIADMK members clash in Lok Sabha over farmer suicides (20)

NEW DELHI: The members of the DMK and the AIADMK on Thursday locked horns in the Lok Sabha on the issue of alleged suicide of seven farmers in the delta region due to withering of crops as they were not getting Cauvery water for irrigation from Karnataka. Raising the issue during the zero hour, DMK parliamentary party leader T.R. Baalu alleged that more than seven farmers had committed suicide due to withering of crops as there was no Cauvery water. While DMK president M. Karunanidhi had announced Rs. 50,000 to each of the family (of the victims), the Tamil Nadu government had not come forward to help them, he charged. At this juncture, AIADMK parliamentary party leader M. Thambidurai intervened and said Mr. Baalu was giving a wrong statement. “He is misleading the House and giving false information regarding farmers in Tamil Nadu”. As Mr. Baalu started reading out names of the farmers allegedly committed suicide, the AIADMK members strongly protested, leading to disruption and pandemonium in the House. Both the party MPs came to the well of the House. The DMK MP charged that the Tamil Nadu government was providing lukewarm response to the incident. But the AIADMK leader claimed that there were no suicide of farmers due to withering crops, as alleged. The State government was providing all the facilities to the farmers, including distribution of free rice and special relief packages. At one point, BJP MP from Bangalore H.N. Ananth Kumar strongly protested against the Tamil Nadu MPs’ charge against Karnataka on the Cauvery issue and said his State itself was facing severe crisis due to shortage of water. Meanwhile, Cuddalore Congress MP K.S. Alagiri has asked Union Water Resource Minister Harish Rawat to immediately notify the final award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal to save the withering crops and stop farmers’ death. The situation could be saved only if the award was notified as it would be binding on Karnataka to release to TN its due share of Cauvery water, he said in a letter to the minister. (The Hindu 21/12/12)

PIL filed in HC on farmers’ suicides in three Tamil Nadu districts (20)

Chennai: A PIL has been filed in Madras High Court seeking to direct Collectors of Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur and Thanjavur districts to file a status report on reported farmer suicides in these regions and to issue 300 grams of rice per head and per day to farmers in the areas immediately. ‘Elephant’ G Rajendran, in his PIL, cited recent media reports on farmer suicides in the three Cauvery delta districts, allegedly due to failure of crops for want of water. He also prayed for High Court’s direction to authorities to pay a minimum of Rs 20 lakh and a government job to family of those who committed suicide, the government to pay Rs 25000 per acre to farmers and to distribute 300 grams of rice per head per day free of cost for six months to farmers in these three districts. When the matter came up, the First Bench, comprising Chief Justice M Y Eqbal and Justice T S Sivagnanam, said, “before entertaining this PIL, we wish to hear the Advocate General in this matter.” The bench posted the matter for the first week of January. (Zee News 22/12/12)

Punjab looks to reform agri marketing (20)

Chandigarh: The Parkash Singh Badal government may not have opened its doors to foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail yet but the state is ready to usher in much-delayed reforms in agricultural marketing to break the monopoly of state-owned markets, ensure better prices to farmers and push its diversification agenda. Punjab has been dithering on adopting the Model Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act, adopted so far by 16 states after it was prepared by the agriculture ministry in 2003 and circulated to states. Agricultural marketing being a state subject, Punjab had formed a cabinet sub-committee to look into its various aspects remained noncommittal to the reforms owing to a powerful middlemen lobby, high income from market fees and huge infrastructure created for government procurement operations. The Punjab government has now given approval in principle to amend the existing Punjab APMC Act, 1961, to allow free play to private players and farmers. “We are in the process of amending the APMC Act to boost the state’s diversification programme by ensuring better prices to farmers,” financial commissioner (development) G S Sandhu said. Once adopted, the amendments will pave the way for farmgate purchase - direct sale of produce directly to private companies by farmers without the compulsion of going through notified markets administered by the Agricultural Produce Market Committees. It would also allow setting up of private marketing yards and special markets or special commodities markets in any market area. It also has provisions such as public-private partnership in management of agricultural markets, single-point levy of market fee, one-time licence to market functionaries to operate in more than one market, and no deduction towards commission from farmers. Punjab, however, is likely to adopt only those provisions that aid its diversification programme. (Indian
Tamil Nadu sugarcane farmers demand support price of Rs 3,000 per tone (20)

Chennai: More than 500 representatives of farmers assembled at Chennai Chepauk on Saturday to oppose the Congress-led UPA Government at the Centre. “This is the most unpopular Government in post-independent India. This Government is unresponsive and indifferent to the causes of farmers,” Arpathi Kalyanam, a sugarcane farmer from Nagapattinam district told The Pioneer. He and other farmer leaders staged a one-day fast demanding a reasonable price for sugarcane cultivators in the State. Activists of the Consortium of Indian Farmers Association (CIFA) who participated in the protest asked the Government to raise the support price of sugarcane from Rs 2,350 per tonne to Rs 3,000 per tonne, excluding cutting and transportation charges. “The cost of cultivation of sugarcane is `2,600 per tonne. According to the recommendations by the National Farmers Commission, the farmers should be paid the cost of production and 50 per cent of the cost of production should be maintained as the minimum support price. Though the recommendations were submitted to the Union Government in 2007, no action has been taken till date,” said M Puthisigamani, president, CIFA’s Tamil Nadu unit. Kattumannarkoil Kannan, State leader of the Bharatiya Kisan Morcha declared that the sugarcane cultivators in the State would be forced to declare a crop holiday if the Government does not come forward to help them. “Why should we cultivate sugarcane if we are not given reasonable returns for the crop,” he exclaimed. Puthisigamani pointed out that the sugarcane farmers should be paid a minimum of ‘3,000 per tonne. “If the sugarcane farmers in Tamil Nadu declare a crop holiday, sugar mills as well as the liquor industry in the country may have to pull the shutters down,” he added. Farmers from all over the State were unanimous in their resentment towards the Manmohan Singh Government which according to them has done nothing to help the farming community. Sugarcane is cultivated in more than four lakh acres in Tamil Nadu. “There are nearly five lakh sugarcane farmers in the State. The sugar factories, both in the private as well as cooperative sectors, are making huge profits by exploiting the farmers,” said R V Giri, general secretary, CIFA. (Pioneer 30/12/12)

Farmers seek guidance in improving agricultural methods (20)

PUNE: Farmers attending a convention on improving agricultural practices on Sunday had a common complaint: "We start off with an activity like water harvesting, but lose path midway because there is nobody to provide us with consistent guidance." About 1,500 farmers from Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Rajasthan are in the city for the two-day convention of agricultural activists organised by the Suyog Charitable Trust. At one of the gat (group) meetings on water management on Sunday, farmers from districts around Nashik, Pune, Thane and Raigad were told how to promote water conservation in their respective villages. The resource person, Vivek Giridhari, a journalist-turned activist who has been working closely with farmers for over 13 years now, told the farmers that if they want to manage their water resources better they should start well before the crisis begins. "Government agencies are under the impression that water harvesting is not needed in areas that receive good rainfall. For instance, Thane district receives over 2500 mm rainfall in a season. But several villages in the district struggle to meet their drinking water needs in summer," he said. Farmers from Thane, Nandurbar and Ahmednagar too shared their experiences. "We constructed a check dam in our village with people's participation. The results are positive and our dependence on others for meeting our farms' irrigation needs has gone down significantly," said an agricultural activist from Nandurbar district near Nashik. All the farmers hailed from mountainous regions. So, they have the advantage of drawing water from freshwater springs that pass through the hills either to form rivers or join big rivers. "Groundwater table can be increased by arresting the flow of water. This helps tide over the crisis during summers," said Giridhari. Farmers were pleasantly surprised to know how beneficial water harvesting could be. However, the number of farmers/farm activists who attended the meeting was a small fraction of the number of farmers, mostly tribals, who suffer on account of ignorance, lack of enthusiasm and exploitation. Giridhari appealed to the farmers to make full use of the Vasundhara programme, an initiative of the state agriculture department. "This scheme will bring government aid straight to your village." The resource person, however, was critical of the latest government resolution (GR) of the state which makes the village sarpanch head of the samiti which will decide allocation of funds under the Vasundhara project. "Since it is the people's money, the gram sabha should be empowered to take a call on utilising the money for the development of village. It will also avoid unwanted political meddling," said Giridhari. (Times of India 31/12/12)