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Special Correspondent

12 July 2023, 02:24 PM IST

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Vadakara: The prices of ball copra (unda variety) continue to crash, as the Kerala government awaits approval for the MSP-based procurement of such varieties. At the end of May, the Kerala agricultural department sent a letter to the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare stating the demand. However, the union government has not given any response so far.

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It should be noted that just over five more months are remaining for this year's procurement season to

end. The minimum support price of ball copra is set at Rs 11,750 per quintal. Meanwhile, ball copra is now available in the Kerala market for a mere Rs 6,900 per quintal. This is Rs 4,850 lower than the set MSP for the particular variety.

Such a 'huge' difference between the MSP and the market price for the variety is being recorded for the first time in history. In the last 15 years, the market price of ball copra has gone below its MSP only on two occasions. Earlier in 2018, the market price of ball copra was Rs 5,323 while the MSP for that year was set at Rs 5,500, a difference of only 3.2 pc. However, the current difference in prices is estimated at 41.27 pc, the sharpest fall since 2013.

In October 2021, the price of ball copra had scaled up to Rs 18, 250 per quintal. Earlier, ball copra of copras was considered to be a safer bet when compared to coconuts and regular copras. Hence, several farmers are engaged in the production of the particular variety. However, the current trend is alarming and might force several farmers to pull out of its production.

At the same time, the situation is starkly different in the neighbouring state of Karnataka. There, 45,465 tonnes of ball copra have been procured and handed over to NAFED so far. It was collected from around 37,682 farmers. Rs 170 crores have been distributed among the farmers in the state as well. Karnataka accounts for 65.5 pc of the total ball copra production in the country. While Kerala's contribution stands at 13.5 pc, Tamil Nadu accounts for 10 pc of the total production. Meanwhile, traders in North India are exploiting the situation and are piling up stocks. They are planning to sell out their products during the festival season. Hence, thwarting the possibility of a jump in prices at that time.

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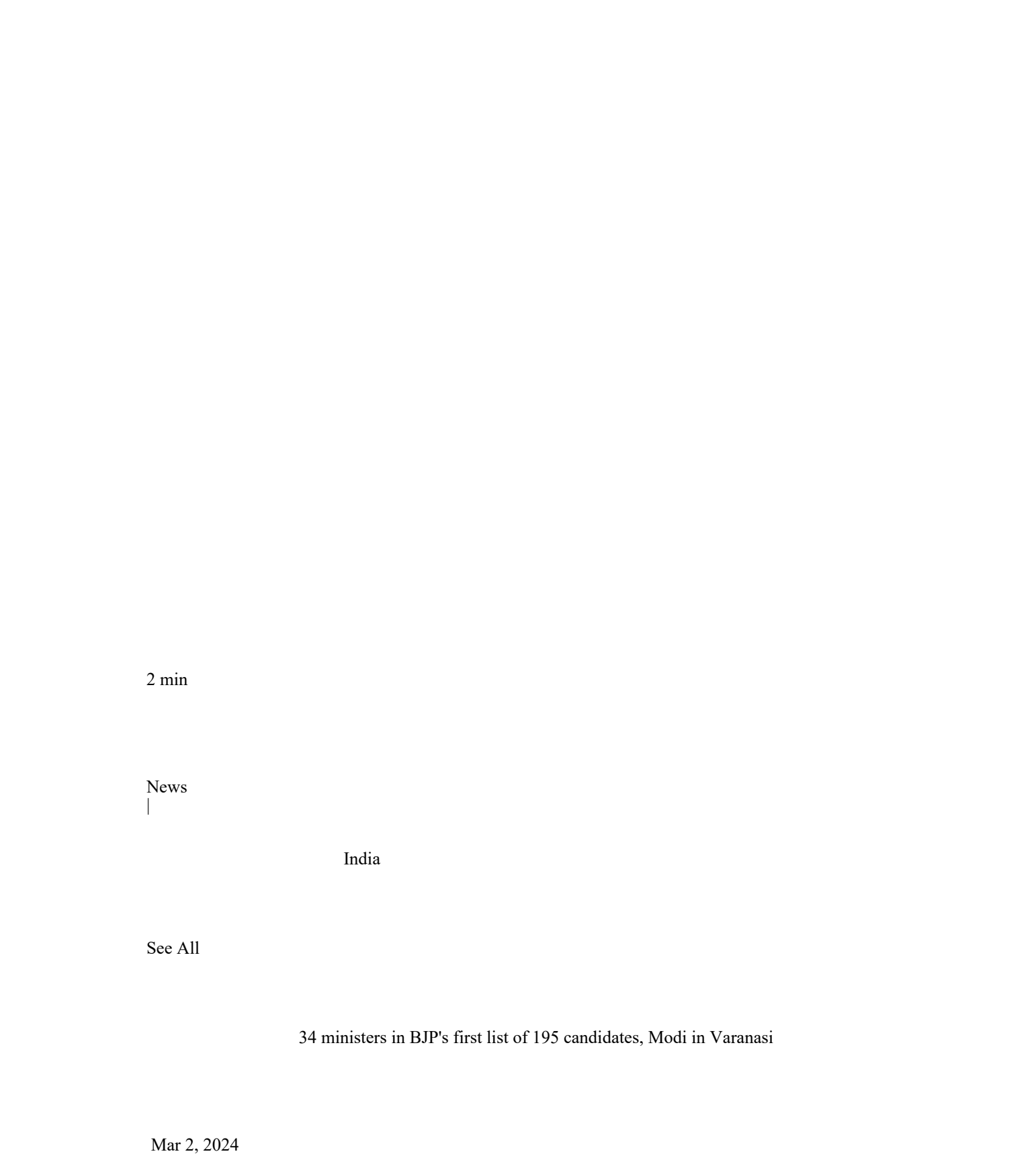
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