

## Importation of insect germplasm: Arrival of Water Hyacinth Planthopper, *Megamelus scutellaris* in India

Water hyacinth (*Pontederia crassipes*) is an aggressive invasive aquatic weed that severely disrupts ecosystems and socio-economic activities in India by suppressing phytoplankton and decreasing dissolved oxygen levels. While biological control agents such as *Orthogalumna terebrantis* (introduced in 1982/1986) and *Neochetina* weevils (*Neochetina bruchi* and *Neochetina eichborniae* introduced in 1983) have been effective, the scale of infestation demands additional agents for better management.

*Megamelus scutellaris* Berg (Hemiptera: Delphacidae), the water hyacinth planthopper native to South America, has shown promising control efficacy in the United States and South Africa by causing physiological damage to water hyacinth and facilitating phytopathogen invasion. Host specificity studies confirm its safety, as it does not affect other wetland plants.

Through the collaborative efforts of ICAR-NBAIR, Bengaluru, and ICAR-DWR, Jabalpur, with the import permit granted by the Government of India (IP001FBD2025000054 dated 14.11.25), cultures of *M. scutellaris* were obtained from Prof. Julie Coetzee and Ms. Samella Ngxande-Koza, Centre for Biological Control, Department of Zoology and Entomology, Rhodes University, South Africa. The shipment arrived on 23.11.25 and is currently maintained under QC-2 quarantine facility at ICAR-NBAIR for conducting host specificity and safety trials.

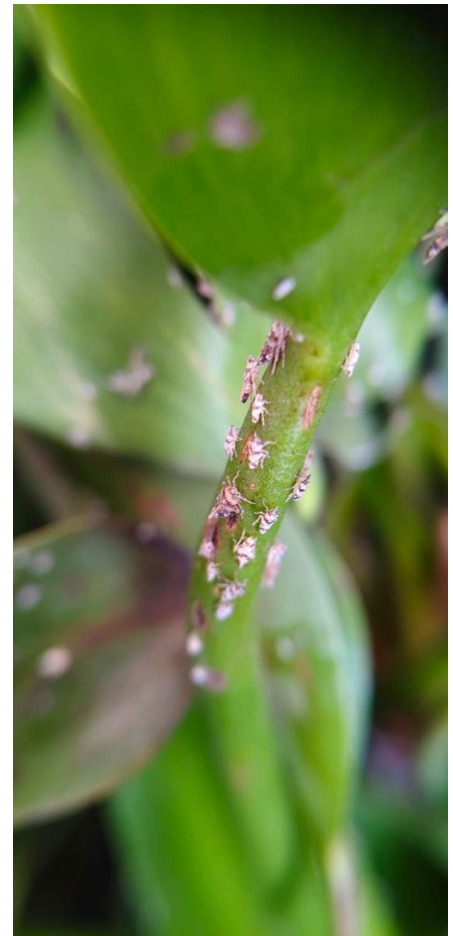
If successful, India will become the third country to release *M. scutellaris* for water hyacinth management, following the USA and South Africa. It is expected to work effectively in synergy with existing agents *N. eichborniae*, *N. bruchi*, and *O. terebrantis*.

Dr. M. Sampath Kumar (Senior Scientist, ICAR-NBAIR) and Dr. M. Deeksha (Scientist, ICAR-DWR) are involved in this initiative for sustainable aquatic weed control in India.





Release of insects by Director in the quarantine facility of ICAR-NBAIR, Bengaluru



The water hyacinth planthopper, *Megamelus scutellaris* Berg (Hemiptera: Delphacidae)