

ICAR-CIARI Celebrates 80th Independence Day with Patriotic Fervour



The ICAR-Central Island Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR-CIARI) celebrated the 80th Independence Day with patriotic fervour at its headquarters in Garacharma, Sri Vijaya Puram, as well as at its Regional Centre in Minicoy, Lakshadweep, and KVKs in South Andaman, North & Middle Andaman and Nicobar.

The celebrations witnessed enthusiastic participation of staff, students and their families, creating an atmosphere of national pride and unity.

The programme commenced with the hoisting of the National Flag by Dr. Jai Sunder, Director, ICAR-CIARI, followed by the National Anthem. Addressing the gathering, Dr. Jai Sunder paid tribute to the freedom fighters and national leaders whose sacrifices and contributions paved the way for India's independence.

He highlighted India's remarkable journey over the past eight decades and recalled the significant contribution of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) towards agricultural transformation, food security and self-reliance.

Dr. Jai Sunder stated that as India progresses towards the centenary of independence, ICAR is also moving towards its centenary, while ICAR-CIARI is approaching its 50th year of dedicated service to island agriculture. He emphasized that over the past eight decades, ICAR has played a pivotal role in enhancing agricultural production, strengthening food and nutritional security, promoting crop diversification and developing technologies suited to diverse agro-ecological conditions.

Highlighting recent achievements of ICAR-CIARI, he informed that 18 crop and spice varieties had been recommended for release through the State Seed Sub-Committee, including rice, mung bean, urd bean, brinjal, Malabar tamarind and tejpat. These varieties are expected to contribute to nutritional security, crop diversification and agricultural self-reliance in the island ecosystem.

On climate-resilient agriculture, Dr. Jai Sunder highlighted the identification of the rice line Dweep Dhan-11, which possesses superior tolerance to flood and salinity and holds considerable promise for climate-resilient rice production under island conditions.

He further informed that during the year, the Institute strengthened its intellectual property portfolio by filing three patents, ten design registrations, three trademarks and two copyrights. Two technologies were also successfully commercialized or transferred for wider adoption and upscaling, reflecting the Institute's efforts to translate research into technologies benefiting farming and allied communities.

Speaking on fisheries and aquaculture, he highlighted the Institute's efforts in standardizing biofloc technologies, seaweed cultivation and aquaculture practices for island farmers. Under coastal and marine resource management, 32 years of shoreline data were mapped for the Car Nicobar Management Plan, while high-suitability zones for aquaculture were identified.

In Minicoy, a second Fish Aggregating Device (FAD) was deployed to enhance tuna catches while reducing fuel consumption, supporting the livelihoods of fishing communities.

Dr. Jai Sunder also highlighted the strengthening of agrometeorological services at the Institute. The Agro-meteorological Observatory was upgraded under the IMD-sponsored Gramin Krishi Mausam Seva (GKMS) project, while location-specific agrometeorological advisories were disseminated through multiple platforms to enable farmers to make timely and informed decisions on crop and farm management.

He appreciated the Institute's efforts in implementing the Government of India initiative Khet Bachao Abhiyan, with emphasis on balanced fertilizer use, vermicompost, green leaf manure and biological control agents such as *Trichoderma*. The Institute also renovated its vermicompost unit to promote recycling of farm waste, resource conservation, diversification and efficient utilization of farm resources. Quality planting materials and seeds were produced and supplied to island farmers during the year.

Emphasizing the importance of sustainable and green energy, Dr. Jai Sunder highlighted the installation of a solar energy system at the Institute to reduce dependence on conventional power sources. He said that similar green-energy initiatives are planned for other locations, including KVKs.

He also congratulated the Institute's scientists for preparing a contingency plan to address the potential impacts of El Niño in the islands and appreciated efforts towards implementing institutional frameworks for data sharing, communication, gender mainstreaming and MELIA (Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Impact Assessment), aimed at strengthening transparent, inclusive and evidence-based agricultural research and development.

Dr. Jai Sunder congratulated scientists and staff members who received awards, recognitions and other distinctions for their contributions. He called upon all scientists and staff to continue pursuing excellence in research, technology development and extension activities and to work with greater dedication towards improving the livelihoods and welfare of the farming and fishing communities of the islands.

The celebrations concluded with a colourful cultural programme featuring performances and fun activities by staff, students and their families. Prizes were distributed to winners and participants in recognition of their enthusiastic participation.

The 80th Independence Day celebrations at ICAR-CIARI reflected the Institute's continued commitment to agricultural progress, sustainable island development and the vision of a self-reliant and resilient India.