

## **VISIT OF ACHARYA DEVVRAT, HON'BLE GOVERNOR OF GUJARAT, NATIONAL SEMINAR ON NATURAL FARMING IN NORTH-EAST INDIA & E-LAUNCH OF GUJARAT BHAVAN AT NEHU, SHILLONG**

**May 21, 2023:** A one-day national seminar on "Natural Farming in North-East India: A Vision towards Sustainable Agriculture, Livelihood and Nutritional Security" was organised by the BIRAC's BioNEST Bio-Incubator (B3I) Facility, North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Tura Campus in association with ICAR Regional Centre - North Eastern Hill Areas (RC-NEH), Umiam, Meghalaya; Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Cell, NEHU and Indian Institute of Sustainability (IIS), Gujarat University (GU) on Sunday, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023, at the U Kiang Nangbah Guest House (Old Guest House), NEHU, Shillong. The inaugural session of the program was graced by the Chief Guest Acharya Devvrat, Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat; Prof. Prabha Shankar Shukla, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Meghalaya and Chairperson of the session; and special guests Dr. V. K. Mishra, Director, ICAR RC – NEH Region, Meghalaya; Prof. Mayuriben Bhatia & Shri. Shwetal Sutaria, Executive Council Members of Gujarat University.

The program started with the lighting of the lamp and felicitation of the guests on behalf of NEHU & IIS, GU with traditional, characteristic and ethnic gifts from Meghalaya & Gujarat. The gathering of the dignitary and audiences was warmly welcomed by Dr. B.K. Mishra, Project Investigator, BioNEST Facility & Head, Department of Rural Development and Agricultural Production (RDAP), NEHU, Tura campus. The session proceeded with Dr. V. K. Mishra, Director, ICAR-RC-NEH, Umiam, Meghalaya briefing the participants about the green revolution, use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, deficiency of soil nutrients, soil erosion, decreasing soil biodiversity, water scarcity, the reasons behind, consequences and possible remedies in form of Natural & Organic Farming.

The address was followed by a series of events strengthening the bond between NEHU & GU. The joint launching of the Certificate Course in "Natural Farming, Agricultural Entrepreneurship and Cooperatives" by NEHU & IIS, GU was the first big step together, followed by the E-launch of Gujarat Bhavan by Chief Guest Acharya Devvrat, Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat in the presence of the members of Gujarat University, to be established at NEHU, Shillong in near future by Indian Institute of Sustainability, Gujarat University. Further as a token of respect and gesture of goodwill from Gujarat University, Prof. Prabha Shankar Shukla, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, NEHU, Meghalaya and Dr. B.K. Mishra, Head, Department

of RDAP, NEHU, Tura was recognised as Distinguished & Adjunct Professor respectively in IIS, GU.

Afterwards, Prof. Prabha Shankar Shukla, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, North-Eastern Hill University, Meghalaya welcomed the Governor of Gujarat to NEHU and the state of Meghalaya. Prof. Shukla drew the attention of the gathering towards the ancient knowledge of Vedic scriptures and the reinvention and reaffirmation of the same by the modern world, especially in the field of agriculture. Prof Shukla mentioned the emergence of Natural Farming as just another example in this row leading to sustainable agriculture, livelihood & food security. Prof. Shukla thanked the governor for gracing the occasion and welcomed the opening of Gujarat Bhawan in NEHU, and promised the establishment of the Meghalaya Bhawan at Gujarat University depicting the diverse culture of the state.

Acharya Devvrat, Hon'ble Governor of Gujarat congratulated NEHU and IIS, GU for working together for the benefit of the academia, society and the country at large. He said this is the true beginning of the “Amrit Kaal ka Bharat” uniting the country under “Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat”. He also appreciated the team of NEHU and IIS, GU for organising the event and launching the certificate course and Gujarat Bhawan within six months of signing the MoU between GU & NEHU on November 8, 2022, at Rajbhavan of Gujarat. While speaking to the audience, the governor shared his story and experience of being a farmer, the importance of the natural farming system and the necessity of avoiding the use of chemical fertilizers & pesticides that ruin the soil, health and environment. Governor elaborated on his journey from Chemical to Organic to Natural farming. Acharya Devvrat explained although the green revolution has made us self-sufficient, the harmful effect of using pesticides, chemicals, urea, and fertilisers was being observed on a daily basis in the form of lifestyle disorders and hence, natural farming becomes the need of the hour. Lastly, Shri Sudhanshu Jangir, Director of the Indian Institute of Sustainability, Gujarat University delivered the motion of thanks. The inaugural session ended with a group photo and singing of the National Anthem.

The technical session began with the lecture of Dr. Jayanta Layek, Scientist in Agronomy, Crop Production Division, ICAR RC-NEH Region, Umiam, Meghalaya on the Integrated Organic Farming System for Enhancing System Productivity and Livelihood of Hill Farmers. Dr. Layek explained the low profitability in agriculture due to climatic stresses and unplanned and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. He also showcased the achievable greater yield and profit in the long term through integrated organic farming systems and voiced

for designing region- and crop-specific all-inclusive organic cum natural farming systems considering the climatic conditions and soil quality.

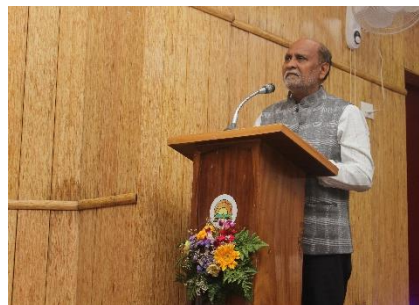
The next speaker, Dr. Janani P., from ICAR-Central Potato Research Institute Research Station [ICAR-CPRI(RS)], Shillong, Meghalaya discussed the Future Prospects of Organic Farming of Potatoes in NER. Dr. Janani talked about the scope of organic potatoes in NE India, the challenges of organic potato farming, strategies for increasing potato productivity – crop, weed & nutrient management

systems and the evolution of high-yielding, multiple disease-resistant potato varieties.

The last session was taken by Dr Deepak Bhagat, Associate Professor, Department of Management, NEHU, Tura Campus, who discussed the food sovereignty and nutritional security issues in Hill and Mountain states, biophysical & socio-economic challenges, the need for policy development and implementation including promotion of cash crops, adoption of diverse cropping patterns, cultivation of medicinal plants, wild edible plants, and insects. The seminar ended with an entertaining question-answer round and sharing of experiences among the speakers and audiences.

Lastly, the concluding remarks were delivered by Prof. B. Panda, Honorary Director, ICSSR NERC, Shillong as Chairman of the session and Dr. Dinesh Bhatia, Associate Professor, Department of Biomedical Engineering, NEHU, Meghalaya as Repertoire. The program ended on a good note with an affirmation of the need for adopting Natural Farming for sustainable development.

## **INAUGURAL SESSION**





## TECHNICAL SESSION



*Fig. Memories of National Seminar on "Natural Farming in North-East India: A vision towards Sustainable Agriculture, Livelihood and Nutritional Security."*