

The President inaugurates the 2nd Indian Rice Congress in Cuttack

Rice the basis of food security, a key factor for the economy - Smt. Murmu

Prime Minister's effort is that none remains malnourished in the country – Shri Tomar

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The 2nd Indian Rice Congress-2023 was inaugurated in Cuttack today by the President Smt. Draupadi Murmu in the presence of Odisha Governor Prof. Ganeshi Lal, Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Shri Narendra Singh Tomar and Odisha Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Empowerment, Fisheries and Animal Resource Development, Shri Ranendra Pratap Swain. Speaking on the occasion, the President said that rice is the basis of food security in India and also a major factor for our economy.



Addressing the grand ceremony at the National Rice Research Institute, the President Smt. Murmu said that today India is the leading consumer and exporter of rice, for which a lot of credit goes to this institute, but when the country became independent, the situation was different. In those days we were unable to meet our food requirements and were dependent upon imports to fulfill our needs. The President said that as irrigation facilities expanded in the last century, rice was grown in new places and found new consumers. Paddy crop

requires large amounts of water, but many parts of the world are facing severe water scarcity due to climate change. Droughts, floods, cyclones are more frequent now, making rice cultivation more vulnerable. He said that even though rice is being grown on new land, there are places where traditional varieties are facing challenges. Today we have to find a middle way, on the one hand we have to preserve the traditional varieties and on the other, maintain the ecological balance. There is also the challenge of saving the soil from excessive use of chemical fertilizers, we need to reduce the dependence on such fertilizers to keep the soil healthy. He expressed confidence that scientists are working to develop ecofriendly rice production systems.

The President said that rice is the basis of our food security, so its nutritional aspects should also be considered. A large section of low-income groups depend on rice, which is often their only source of daily nutrition, so providing protein, vitamins and essential micronutrients through rice can help combat malnutrition. On the development of country's first high protein rice by NRRI, she said that development of such bio-fortified varieties is ideal and expressed confidence that the scientific community of the country will be able to meet the challenge.

Speaking on the occasion, Union Minister Shri Tomar said that India is an agricultural country, so the government tries to give priority to agriculture. Agriculture sector has made a lot of progress as the hard work of our farmers is supplemented by the scientific research. We are not only self-sufficient in terms of food grains, but also among one of the countries which help the world, which is a matter of pride for us. It is the resolve of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi that no child or person in the country remains malnourished. To solve the problem of malnutrition, biofortified rice varieties should be produced to increase nutritional value; taking steps in this direction, the institute has developed varieties namely CR 310, 311 and 315. This institute has developed 160 varieties of rice. Shri Tomar said that while starting a pilot project, provision has been made in the budget for biofortified rice to be supplied in the PDS. He said that the rice production in the country was only 89 million tonnes in 2010, which has increased by 46 percent to 130MT in 2022, with the efforts of farmers and scientists. India is the second largest producer of rice and we are at Number One in exports.

Shri Tomar said that the Prime Minister, in the last 8-and-a-half years, under the supervision of the President, has taken initiatives to compensate the farmers for the crop loss, so he has given a security cover like the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, while under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi, 11.5 crore farmers have been given Rs. 2.24 Lakh Crore by depositing money in their accounts in an effort to aid their incomes. The use of technology is very important in agriculture to reduce costs, increase production and solve challenges like water scarcity, for this budget provision has been made for attracting technology and private investment in the agriculture sector. The Government of India is working with the States on the Digital Agriculture Mission, for which Rs 450 crore has been allocated in the budget. There are 86 percent small farmers in the country, for their welfare the Prime Minister has increased the short term loans to Rs 20 lakh crore from Rs.6-7 lakh crores in 2014, so that the small farmers do not get buried under loans from moneylenders, This has definitely empowered the farmers. It is the effort of the Government of India to attract private investment in the field of agriculture, for which Rs 1 lakh crore has been allocated towards the Agri Infra Fund and another Rs. 1.5 lakh crore provision made for agriculture and allied sector. This has opened the doors of private investment and efforts are being made to provide necessary infrastructure to the villages. Loans worth Rs. 16,000 crore have been approved so far for projects in the Agri Infra Fund, which is going to benefit the agriculture of our country. It is our endeavour that this Rs. 1 lakh crore reaches the ground as soon as possible, in this effort we moved forward in converting agriculture into an advanced and remunerative avenue by including private investment in it. He expressed the hope that a better roadmap regarding rice cultivation will be prepared in this Congress.



Odisha Governor Prof. Ganeshi Lal said that rice is the staple food of the people of our country and it is deeply embedded in our culture and tradition. Referring to the story of Lord Krishna and Sudama from mythology, he said that rice can solve the issue of food security. He underlined the importance of rice as the staple food of many people. Odisha's Agriculture Minister Shri Swain said that Odisha is not only self-sufficient in rice production, but also supplies rice to 6 other states. There is a lot of scope for increasing rice production in eastern states like Odisha.

In the inauguration ceremony, Dr. Himanshu Pathak, Secretary, DARE and Director General of ICAR, Dr. P.K. Aggarwal, President of the Association of Rice Research Workers, Dr. A.K. Nayak, Director of the Institute and Organizing Secretary Dr. S. Saha were present. Farmers, scientists from India and abroad, officers of central and state agriculture and other departments are participating in the four-day Congress. Books were also released on this occasion.



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