

Annual Yak Mela,2021

The ICAR-National Research Centre on Yak, Dirang organized Annual Yak Mela,2021 at the scenic Lubrang village, situated in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh on 18th November, 2021. The village is solely inhabited by *Brokpas* (yak herders), thus serving the objective of the event to promote and disseminate scientific yak rearing among the yak herders in the country. The Mela was coordinated in collaboration with the District Administration of Dirang Circle, Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, Arunachal Pradesh, 4th Bn ITBP, 30th Bn SSB, NIMAS, Dirang and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).

Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Pema Khandu and Hon'ble Union Minister Law & Justice Shri Kiren Rijju inaugurated the Annual Yak Mela and graced the event as Chief Guest and Guest of Honour respectively, while Dr. B.N. Tripathi, Deputy Director General, Animal Sciences, ICAR Headquarters presided over the function. The Mela was attended by a host of dignitaries belonging to various national institutions, Departments of the state and public leaders.

The Chief Guest, Shri Pema Khandu stated that yaks are found in only selective states and appreciated the effort of ICAR-NRC on Yak through the years to support the livelihood and economy of yak herders through various scientific interventions as well as through supply of critical inputs. He also appreciated the bankable yak scheme developed by ICAR-NRC on Yak in collaboration with NABARD and asked the state Government to follow suit with a similar scheme for the yak herders. The Chief Guest while acknowledging the tough life of the *Brokpas*, urged for conservation of yak stating it as the duty of the people and the Government alike. He concluded with the promise for assistance and development of marketing and entrepreneurship sector for yak products.

The Guest of Honour, Shri Kiren Rijju in his address admired the beauty of the village and assured assistance towards better livelihood and infrastructure. He strongly urged to make Yak Mela an annual festival to promote tourism in the region.

Dr. B.N. Tripathi, DDG, Animal Science, emphasized the need to increase yak population and to propagate superior germplasm mostly because it is strongly intertwined to the related socio-economic aspect of the yak farmers. He urged for the adoption of developed technologies for breeding as well as for value addition of products. Dr. B.N. Tripathi acknowledged the need for sedentarization facility in order to alleviate the hardships faced by the *Brokpas* during their migration. He also emphasized the development of products value chain and marketing through Public-Private Partnerships and or co-operatives as the need of the hour.

Dr. Mihir Sarkar, Director ICAR-NRC on yak, Dirang, in his welcome address highlighted the Yak Mela's objective to promote scientific yak rearing and celebrating the life of yak and *Brokpas*. He also educated the crowd regarding the yak insurance policy of National Insurance Company Ltd. (NICTL) and bankable scheme for yak developed in collaboration with NABARD which are both the product of relentless effort of the Institute for promoting yak husbandry. Dr. Mihir Sarkar also applauded the *Brokpas* for their contribution in conservation and propagation of the unique yak germplasm.

The Yak Mela was participated by *Brokpas* from nine (9) neighbouring villages and critical inputs in the form of concentrate feeds, Complete Feed Blocks, mineral mixtures, gum boots, ropes, solar lamps, first aid kit for yaks and COVID kit for the farmers were distributed to 156 farmer beneficiaries under Schedule Tribe Component (STC) of the Institute. Furthermore, Vanaraja chicks were also distributed to four farmers of Lubrang village under ICAR-Directorate of Poultry Research (DPR) by the Project Incharge of the Institute. There was also performance from cultural groups and yak herders from Nyukmadung village performed the famous yak dance giving the event an aura of festivity. A host of competitions were also organized in the Mela viz. best *Brokpa* stall, best attired *Brokpa*, best yak bull, best decorated yak bull, best female yak or *Bree*, highest milk producing *Bree*, best *Dzo*, best *Dzomo* etc. to encourage the yak farmers. The event gathered a crowd of around 2000 people and stalls from various State Departments as well as para-military forces were installed. The villagers too set up stalls showcasing their rich tradition and way of life; giving the crowd a glimpse of their everyday life with the ever-majestic yaks.