

# ICAR-NRC on Mithun upbeat after 31 years



A domestic mithun being fed salt by its owner.

## Nagaland Today News

**MEDZIPHEMA:** Nestled in the plains of the rice bowl area of Nagaland in Medziphema, the ICAR-National Research Centre on Mithun was established on June 2, 1988 to work on the improvement of the unique bovine species of the North-Eastern states, of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram.

The 31st Foundation Day celebrations was held on Saturday in the Centre and attended by the several stake holders, staff of the centre and students of the St. Francis School.

In his opening remark on Saturday while delivering the 31st Foundation Day Lecture, Dr. Joykrushna Jena, DDG (Fisheries and Animal Sciences), ICAR, New Delhi said

he was pleasantly surprised to learn of the potential and quality of the mithun milk that adds value to the animal. The fat content of Mithun milk Dr. Jena said is over 10%. This is more than that of cow milk which is between 3.5% - to 4%, while fat content of buffalo milk is 6%-8%. He urged the NRC to study the metabolites of the mithun milk and define them.

Outlining his vision for the Mithun centre Dr. Jena said it was necessary for the centre to draw up a 'Sectoral Vision for the next 50 years'. This should include how the mithun population in the whole region now tagged at approximately three lakh can grow to 5 lakh or more in the next few decades. "The percentage of growth that would be required to reach the target and the

identification of other stakeholders to achieve these targets must include the evaluation of the "economics of the eco-system" he said.

Earlier in his welcome address the Director of the Centre Dr. Abhijit Mitra said

"The animal is not only integral to the socio economic, religious and cultural life of the communities in these states it also has great potential for meat, milk, hide and draught power. The traditional belief has been that mithuns can only be reared under a free-range eco system and the Centre is trying to offer an alternate to mithun rearers, faced with shrinking forest cover and the loss of animals due to wild carnivores".

In the last thirty years 'research' into developing an alternative package of practices for Mithun rearing under the semi-intensive system has been the mission of the centre. After successful implementation in the Institute's mithun farm since the last two decades, this semi-intensive model is being further extended under field condition. During 2017-2018, a total of seven semi-intensive units have been established.

The other pressing concern is the absence of bankable schemes for mithun farming. Despite mithun husbandry being recognised and included in the National Livestock Mission as an important activity the lack of bankable schemes is preventing mithun rearers, who are mostly resource poor to avail of subsidized schemes.

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There are no insurance schemes for the animal either. The Institute has initiated a feasibility study for a scheme that will fill in these gaps with the Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry of the mithun rearing states and NABARD.

And last but not least the ICAR-NRC on Mithun, is trying to add value to the meat of the animal that is normally consumed in the area. Its attempts to register the meat as a Food Animal under FSSAI, in New Delhi is under process. The Institute has also demonstrated the potential of the mithun which is not only inherently organic but also comparatively leaner and tastier than

other bovine meat.

The 31st Foundation Day celebrations of the institute included a visit to the Mithun Farm in Medzipheema. Here Dr.J.Jena, DDG (Fisheries and Animal Sciences), ICAR, New Delhi was accompanied by the Director, ICAR-NRC on Mithun, Dr. Mitra.

The Dr Jena laid the foundation stone of a Semen Lab, and inaugurated a Mithun Bull Shed, Experimental Sheds and Fencing of the Mithun Farm.

The day also saw the Institute recognise its best employees with the distribution of certificates and trophies and tribal sub plan (TSP) materials were handed to the best Mithun farmer in the area.