

## PRESS RELEASE

The second three-day International Festival, "BAMFEST 2005" on the Bamboo heritage of North Eastern Region of India was organized by the Cane and Bamboo Technology Centre (CBTC), Guwahati in collaboration with the Government of Meghalaya at the Central Library premises, Shillong from May 02 to 04, 2005. This Festival was complemented by a number of Technical Sessions on Bamboo Technology. A unique feature of this event is the fact that for the first time, an event on bamboo in India has been accorded recognition by the World Bamboo Organization (WBO) based Boston, USA. The NEHHDC, MHHDC, NEHU, IFAD, GTZ, Department of Science and Technology, Government of India supported the Festival. The Ministry of DoNER and the North Eastern Council, Shillong facilitated the holding of the Festival.

This Festival brought together on a platform, a number of international experts in bamboo, who focussed their combined attention on this versatile grass by way of brainstorming, sharing and exchanging views. The Technical Seminars complementing the event focussed on the following themes:

- Management of bamboo resources -- plantation to replenish diminishing resources for supply of raw materials as well as research and development aspects;
- Processing technologies -- machinery and their adaptation to Indian needs;
- Bamboo for economic development -- employment opportunities, production management and design of bamboo products, and their marketing, and human resource development;
- Bamboo housing technologies -- for earthquake-prone areas, rural and hilly areas.

Together with the Festival, an Exhibition named BAM-EXPO was also held at the Central Library campus at Shillong. The participating teams were crafts-people from the eight north-eastern States, IPIRTI, NERAMAC, NEHHDC and MHHDC, etc. There was also participation from Machine manufacturers, Tissue culture Units and Industrial and International Houses. The Exhibition show-cased the ethnic and cultural heritage of the North Eastern Region. A Bamboo Food Festival, Music Festival, Film Shows, Traditional Bamboo sports, Essay and Painting competitions was also held.

A number of international experts from India and abroad participated in the Seminar, prominent among them being Dr. Victor Brias from Belgium, Dr. Ding Xingcui from China and Mr. Joseph De Reze from France.

The objectives of the festival were:

- 1) Revival of traditional crafts of the region;
- 2) To highlight local customs and usage of bamboo;
- 3) To exhibit the capabilities and export potential of craftspeople who are involved with processing and semi-processing of bamboo;
- 4) To forge closer linkages and networking amongst craftspeople from different States through exchanging and sharing of experience;
- 5) To discuss common issues for adopting newer technologies in the field of craftsmanship;
- 6) To provide a brand name and a common platform to the crafts groups from the North East;
- 7) To generate awareness about the cane and bamboo sector which is largely ignored by the media;

8) To help project bamboo as the essential substitute for timber in the years to come.

The Technical Seminars highlighted the industrial and scientific aspects of bamboo, management of resources, introduction of newer technologies for economic development and cost-effective housing while the Bamboo Festival brought to light the pivotal role that bamboo plays in the social life of the people of this region. This versatile grass occupies a place pride of among the bountiful natural resources for daily use of the people of this region and is the main fabric of the cultural tapestry of the rural people of this region.