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Neeri to study Ganga's medicinal values: Uma Bharti



Union Water Resources Minister Uma Bharti on Tuesday said the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (Neeri) will evaluate the "medicinal values" of river Ganga.

"Neeri study will come up with a report evaluating the medicinal values of river Ganga. It will study if there was any medicinal value; if there is any medicinal value, whether it is still there or it has finished. If it has finished, then how did it finish and due to which elements?" she said. She also said that Indian Forest Research Institute, Dehradun will come up with a detailed project report (DPR) on the tributaries of Ganga, its biodiversity and catchment area.

"The Forest Research Institute will prepare a DPR on the tributaries of river Ganga, its biodiversity, and catchment area. It will take about one and a half months to prepare the DPR. This is a new document in the history of Ganga," said the minister.

Uma Bharti also said that Neeri will also come up with a report on the quality of water.

"Neeri report will focus on water quality. For the same, they need three seasons - summer, winter and monsoon - to conduct the research. This report will study the changes in the water and where and how does the river change. They will submit the report after the rains. This is also going to be a new initiative."

The minister also mentioned another study to be conducted by Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (Cifri) on the river's "aqua life".

"This study will focus on the aqua life like dolphins, fish and tortoises. It will study when did they exist and how did they get destroyed."

"These are three unique initiatives, which will help us understand Ganga better," she added.

Uma Bharti also said that every project started by her ministry will have a concurrent audit by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG).

www.firstpost.com/india/neeri-to-study-ganga-medicinal-values-uma-bharti-2822416.html

IANS | Jun 8, 2016

Centre plans alternative to Bt cotton

To develop genes that can be integrated into traditional varieties for larger outputs

Photo: Shaju John

RCH-2 Bt Cotton being harvested at a farm near Salem in Tamil Nadu.



The Union government is working to develop a suite of Bt cotton genes that can be integrated into traditional varieties and be made available to farmers as a viable alternative to the current technology, which is largely sourced from Mahyco Monsanto Biotech India Ltd. (MMB).

The Indian Council of Agricultural Research has for many years unsuccessfully tried to develop Bt cotton, which contains insecticidal genes sourced from a soil bacterium and targeted at key cotton pests. However, officials told The Hindu that this project would be led by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).

There were already several genes available in various labs and stages of development, but the aim was “that India not be dependent on foreign technology,” said a top official privy to the project but who did not want to be identified.

While Bt cotton has always been controversial, it is now in the throes of a new controversy with the Agriculture Ministry mooting a change in the way seed companies and seed-technology companies such as the MMB share royalty, technology and determine the price as which farmers buy cotton seed. Different arms of government are split over whether seed tech companies have the right or are obliged to license their technology to seed companies on request. More clarity is expected to emerge on this issue within the next few months.

Slew of technologies

“So far, we’ve had only one brainstorming session,” the same official said, “but we are serious about this and hope to take it up in mission mode.” Institutes such as the National Botanical Research Institute, the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology and the National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources will be among the key agencies for identifying and developing new genes. “We have a slew of technologies — GM as well as non-GM — in our public institutions that we can use to work on cotton,” said K. Vijay Raghavan, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology. “There have been regulatory challenges but things are getting better.”

Cotton is the only genetically-modified seed that’s legally allowed in India. GM food crops such as brinjal and mustard, which are in advanced stages of regulatory clearances, are yet to become available to farmers due to stringent opposition by anti-GM activist groups.

Another government official, aware of the project and who didn’t want to be identified, said that historically multinational companies’ research budgets far outweighed that of Indian research agencies. “This project will have to address that because translating genes into commercial products is a huge challenge,” he told The Hindu.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-plans-alternative-to-bt-cotton/article8701803.ece>

JACOB KOSHY | June 8, 2016

MoU with CLRI infuses hope for resurgence of leather industry



A Memorandum of Understanding that the Erode Tannery Owners' Association has signed with Central Leather Research Institute (CLRI) for technology-infusion to contain pollution holds promise for reviving the industry on the wane.

The new waterless chrome tanning technology has already been trial tested in a few industries in Erode district and once product validation is made by overseas buyers, all the 30 leather units in the district will implement the technology, the association has assured.

The MoU signed by CLRI Director B. Chandrasekaran and Association president Mohamed Hyder on Sunday would pave way for adoption of the breakthrough technology for safeguarding water bodies from pollution caused by toxic effluent containing chromium and sulphates.

There will be no discharge of waste water and the quality of product was comparable to chrome-tanned leather, Dr. Chandrasekaran said, expressing readiness of CLRI to establish a common facility centre for the units with aid from the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.

The Central Government aims to raise export revenue from leather to \$ 27 billion by 2020 from the existing \$ 12.5 billion, he said. The CLRI had applied to patent the technology in 2014.

According to CLRI scientists, there will be enormous saving of water through the technology, since 50 litres of water was hitherto utilised to treat one kg. of animal skin and hide. The new technology using a conventional drum-tanning method involves utilising the patented additives instead of lime and water, thereby resulting in the saving of water and reduction in solid waste.

Closure

“We are keen to adopt green technology rather than clean-up approach,” KKSK Rafiq, Managing Director of KKSK Hides Pvt. Ltd., and former Chairman of CII Erode Zone, said.

Closure of several units had become inevitable due to stringent enforcement of pollution control norms.