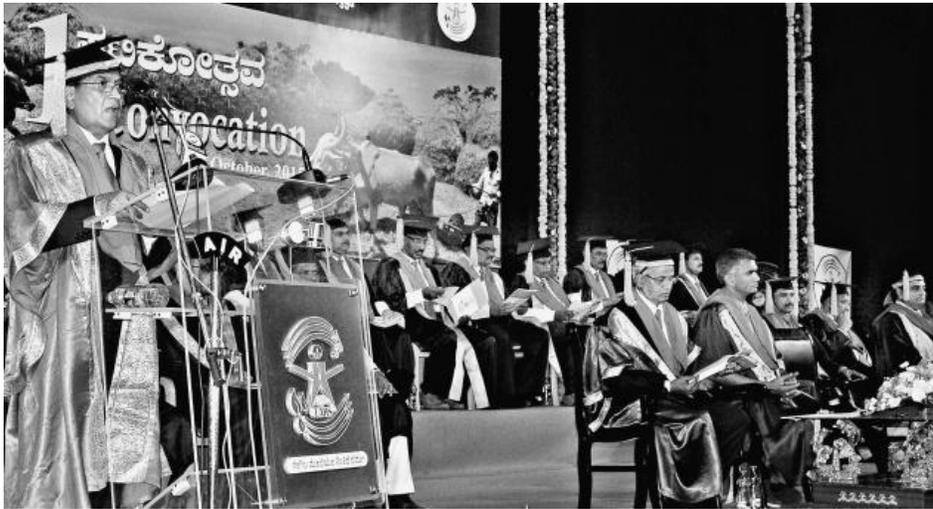


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Conserve bio-diversity of Western Ghats, says expert

• [Veerendra P.M.](#)



R.R. Hanchinal, chairman, Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, at the maiden convocation of the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences in Shivamogga on Monday.— Photo: VAIDYA

R.R. Hanchinal speaks at first convocation of UAHS Shivamogga

R.R. Hanchinal, chairman of the Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Authority, has said the bio-diversity of the Western Ghats region, which can be a useful gene-pool for crop improvement, should be conserved.

Mr. Hanchinal was speaking at the first convocation ceremony of the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, at Kuvempu Rangamandir here on Monday.

Seed banks

He said the Western Ghats was home to a wide variety of cereals, pulses, vegetables, vines, tubers, root crops and fruit trees, and medicinal and aromatic plants. Farmers should be involved in the conservation of local plant genetic resources (PGR) by establishing community seed banks and encouraging farmers to undertake on-farm cultivation of such plant varieties.

He suggested the UAHS- Shivamogga, could establish a germ plasma conservation bank on the bio-diversity of Western Ghats region. Although the nation had rich bio-diversity, at present, 60 per cent of the calorie requirements in the Indian diet was being met by three crop species, rice, wheat and maize, which were widely cultivated.

Owing to green revolution, most of the local varieties of crops that were rich in nutrients and known for their capacity to resist drought and pest infections had become extinct. The narrow crop diversity and its narrow genetic base would have detrimental impact on farming sector and human health in future, he said. The quality of agricultural education in India needed to be strengthened by overhauling the curriculum at regular intervals, upgrading the infrastructure in colleges, enhancing the competence of faculty members on cutting-edge technologies and creating a conducive environment for research. With the objective of enhancing the access to education in agricultural sciences, apart from the traditional under-graduate and postgraduate courses that were being offered by agricultural universities, it was necessary to offer diploma courses to rural youths, he said.

Mr. Hanchinal stressed the need to evolve ways to ensure effective dissemination of technical knowledge generated in agricultural universities and research institutions to the farming community.

Each scientist serving in agricultural universities, along with students, should adopt a village for technology transfer and conduct interactive sessions and on-field demonstrations on new agricultural technologies there, he said. Degrees were awarded to 448 students, who had completed bachelor and master degrees during the convocation ceremony. Minister of State for Agriculture Krishna Byre Gowda, Vice-Chancellor C. Vasudevappa, and Registrar M.S. Vignesh were present.

- **'Bio-diversity of Western Ghats can be a useful gene-pool for crop improvement'**
- **'Strengthen quality of agricultural education by revising curriculum at regular intervals'**

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