

Two-day meet on biosecurity concerns

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Bangalore, Nov 21: The National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) has convened a two-day meeting from Thursday (Nov 23) to discuss the emerging concerns for biosecurity, affecting agriculture, environment and human health.

The meeting, jointly organised with the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (Chennai), would discuss country's preparedness for ensuring biosecurity, aspects of biosecurity relating to food and agriculture, human health and in national context.

According to a NIAS document, the meeting would convey a set of recommendations for ensuring bio-happiness in the country, based on scientifically sound and socially relevant agenda for biosecurity in appropriate areas of concern.

The meeting has been convened by NIAS in the

Biosecurity covers the sectors of food safety, animal and plant life and health and associated environmental risks

backdrop of the recent concern by the National Commission on Farmers (NCF) on the lack of biosecurity system in the country and the need for evolving a national agricultural biosecurity system characterised by high professional, public and political credibility.

NCF's broad outline for a biosecurity system involved goals such as safeguarding the income and livelihood security of farm and fisher families as well as food, health and trade security of the nation.

This could only be achieved through effective and integrated surveillance, vigilance, prevention and control mechanisms designed to protect the pro-

ductivity and safety of crops, farm animals and forest trees, NIAS said.

NCF also called for enhancing national and local level capacity in initiating proactive measures in areas of monitoring, early warning, education, research and international cooperation and to introduce an integrated biosecurity package comprising regulatory measures, education and social mobilisation.

The National Bureau of Plant Genetic Resources had been intercepting many alien invasive pests in imported agricultural commodities and this had triggered the NCF to initiate national debate for a biosecurity system to be

put in place.

NIAS said biosecurity was a strategic and integrated approach that encompassed policy and regulatory frames which analyse and manage risks in the sectors of food safety, animal life and health and plant life and health, including associated environmental risks.

Currently, India has no effective system for detecting, reporting and effectively mitigating outbreaks of new diseases or pests in crop plants and animals. Similarly, no validated intervention was available for food production, processing and distribution system to react to an international contamination or occurrence of a biosecurity threat.

NIAS said that biosecurity was of even greater significance to the country since it was related to livelihood security and major percentage of population, food, health and trade security of the country.